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Thesis

JOHN WYCLIF'S IDEAS FOR THE REFORM OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

by

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"A good man was ther of religioun
And was a pore Persoun of a toun;
But riche he was of holy thought and werk.
He was also a lerned man, a clerk,
That Christes gospel gladly wolde preche;
His parischens devoutly wolde he teche.
Benigne he was, and wondur diligent,
And in adversite ful pacient;
And such he was i-proved ofte sithes
Ful loth were him to curse for his tythes
But rather wolde he yeven out of dowte,
Unto his pore parisschens aboute,
Of his offrynge and eek of his substaunce.
He cowde in litel thing han suffisance.
Wyde was his parisch, and houses fer asondur,
But he ne lafte not for reyne ne thondur,
In sicknesse ne in meschief to visite
The ferrest, in his parissche, moche and lite,
Upon his feet, and in his hand a staf.
This noble ensample unto his scheep he yaf,
That ferst he wroughte, and after that he taughte."

Note: This expresses the spirit of Wyclif excellently, although there is no evidence that Chaucer had Wyclif in mind when he wrote it except that they were contemporaries. (Loserth -- "Sermones", Vol. I, p. xxi quoting "The Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer", ed. by R. Morris, Vol. II, p.16).

INTRODUCTION

A. Decay of the Catholic Church.

While Wyclif himself deserves the honor of doing his own thinking and forging his ideas for the reform of the Roman Catholic Church yet we can better understand him when we know the great forces moving in the civilization of which he was a part and which would necessarily influence him. There were four such forces in the background of Wyclif's life: the decadent Roman Catholic Church, Scholasticism, the rise of England's national consciousness, and the awakening of the English people to the freedom and rights of the individual.

The Roman Catholic Church in Wyclif's time, while it was still the most powerful and pervasive single force in all Europe, had reached its lowest point of spiritual decay. In England the church is computed to have owned one third of the landed property of the realm.[1] The church was free from taxation and no member of the clergy could be

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1. Schaff: History of the Christian Church. Vol. V part II p.304

tried in a lay court. By the threat of excommunication the church was able to extort regular dues from every member, while the church absorbed even more wealth by endowment, the sale of indulgences, exaction of annates and first fruits and the practice of simony. The pope was so powerful that he could appoint foreign absentee bishops to sees in England and even, while subject to the French King with whom England was at war, was able for a time to collect taxes in England although the English suspected him of using the money for the French King's support. The pope was still respected as having the keys to heaven and as being an authority above kings. The individual in Wyclif's day was almost as subject to the law of the church as he is today to the law of the state. The spiritual decay and corruption of the church, however, especially the transfer of the papacy to Avignon was arousing much discontent. The clergy were for the most part unlearned and immoral.[1] In the century and a half since St. Francis and St. Dominic had founded their

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1. Schaff, Vol. V pt. II, p. 307.

orders the monks and friars had lost almost all enthusiasm for poverty and holiness and had become rich and worldly. "Archbishop Arundel, Foxe quaintly says, 'took great snuff and did suspend all such as did not receive him with noise of bells'."[1] Mere boys often held preferments and there were many pluralist and absentee bishops who had suffragans take their places in the sees with exact fees specified for all acts.[2] The bishops rarely came except to collect money. The friars used their powers of confession and absolution as a means of getting money. The church courts and the confessional were notoriously corrupt in the administration of penance.[3] Fines for sin were allowed.[4] All feared the Summoner because

> "He coude somme (summon) on peyne of cristescurs (excommunication)
> And they were gladde for to fille his purs."[5]

"The wealthy not only paid fines instead of penance, but sometimes gave annually a lump sum to the more corrupt courts, to prevent inquiry."[6] In the face

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1. Schaff, Vol. V, pt. II, p.305
2. Workman, II, 108
3. Trevelyan 115
4. Ibid 114
5. Ibid 116 Chaucer
6. Ibid 117

of such corruption it would be a wonder indeed if Green's words were not true when he says it "produced a widespread national irritation which never slept till the Reformation."[1] Likewise it is not surprising to find Chaucer, Langland and especially Wyclif finding fault with such a decadent system. Truly as Workman says, "Medievalism was sick unto death."[2]

B. Scholasticism at Oxford.

The second great force in the background of Wyclif's life was his scholastic training at Oxford. Wyclif went to Oxford in 1345 and spent most of his life there as scholar and teacher until 1381. At Oxford all the problems of religion and politics besides the conflict among the monks, friars, and seculars caused a continual stir. The seculars and friars scorned the monks because they were usually indolent and worldly. The seculars scorned the friars because they so often kept the secular parish priest poor by coming around and taking

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1. Green, p.236
2. Workman I, p.3

most of the people's money with "Pardons hot from Rome", telling stories of travel, selling indulgences and confession cheap, being the more popular because they would not be seen again. The friars were also scorned because they so often got degrees by "letters from lords sealed with wax" and were called "wax doctors." "Such men when they come to preach are only reciters who imitate the ass of Baalam,"[1] it was said. The secular priests who were usually poor and faithful in their parishes were less worldly, as a rule, than the monks, friars and hierarchy and were found to take part with the peasants in the rebellion. Wycliff sympathized with this group, since he was himself of it. He was also fond of the spiritual Franciscans who still kept the vow of St. Francis pure. In this general background Wyclif studied and taught the scholastic learning.

To properly understand Wyclif it is necessary to know his relation to the line of Schoolmen of whom he is usually spoken of as the

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1. Quotes in paragraph from Workman, Vol. I p.92

last. In fact, desiccated as Scholasticism was, the very foundations of Wyclif's thinking were laid in scholastic thought. He did not question Aristotle's authority, though more and more he abandoned him. Plato, he knew only imperfectly through Augustine. But Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, Ockham, Grosseteste, Bradwardine, and Fitzralph all had influences upon Wyclif that are important.

Wyclif's master teacher was Augustine. 'His disciple called him by the famous and most distinguished name of John, son of Augustine'[1] and there is no authority he relies upon or quotes more, outside of the Bible, than Augustine.[2] Wyclif praises Augustine because he founded his religion on theology and scripture. Wyclif was versed in Augustine beyond almost all of his contemporaries[3] and held that Augustine knew the truth better than Plato or Aristotle.[4]

Oxford in Wyclif's time was divided

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1. Workman, I. p. 119 quoting Netter Doctinale l.e. 34,p.186
2. Workman I. p. 132
3. Workman, I p.119
4. Ver. Script. I 35 f

philosophically into two rival schools of Thomists and Scotists. Wyclif accepted neither fully. The influence of Thomas Aquinas is shown in Wyclif's movement back to Augustine. Aquinas' emphasis on the value of a sane mysticism based on communion of God would appeal to him. He approved Aquinas' doctrine that "the doctrine of revelation are above but not contrary to reason, nor can they be demonstrated by reason."[1] Faith thus has great merit as an act of Confidence in God. But more important was the philosophical realism of Wyclif adopted from Aquinas. Wyclif was a "moderate realist",[2] "but in his realism he goes far beyond the moderate doctrine of Thomas."[3] This philosophical position threw him in direct opposition to popular nominalistic philosophy at Oxford and became very significant in Wyclif's doctrine of the Eucharist.

Duns Scotus by his criticism of Aquinas destroyed the rational grounds of faith and consequently the validity of the whole scholastic

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1. Workman I. p.105
2. Schaff, Vol. V Part II p.326
3. Workman Vol. I p.105

method.[1] Reason he held to only valid in the realm of sense. Belief, then, was obedience to the arbitrary will of God, or to God's church. Scotus " criticized everything until he left everything in tatters. In some minds his philosophy led to scepticism; in others we see its results in 'the emotional prostration before the authority properly called faith'".[2] Scotus influenced Wyclif in two ways. "The Reformer inherited his dissolvent spirit without sharing his blind obedience. He accepted also the belief of Duns in the omnipotence of the arbitrary will of God as over against the Thomist conception of the possession of all rational beings of will dependent on understanding."[3] These two influences help to account for Wyclif's critical spirit and his predestinarianism.

Ockham, like Duns Scotus, was a Franciscan. "In the Middle Ages the sons of St. Francis were the fruitful parents of new philosophies, heresies, orthodoxies, rebellions and democracies --

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1. Workman Vol. I p.109
2. Workman, Vol. I pp. 110-111
3. Workman, Vol. I p.111

in all things a contrast to the conservatism and moderation of the Dominicans, with their belief in the infallibility of Aquinas."[1] At Oxford the Franciscans far outnumbered the Dominicans and there was a ceaseless intellectual ferment. Ockham led the reaction against realism and was the second founder of nominalism. Duns Scotus had ascribed reality or objective existence to general ideas; Ockham, like most later Scotists, went a step further and changed realism into nominalism by holding that real universals exist only in the mind. He too relegates all knowledge that transcends sense experience to the realm of faith, and thus, like Duns Scotus heralds the dissolution of scholasticism. Ockham's nominalism at Oxford became allied with the extreme materialistic conceptions of transubstantiation. Reason was abandoned and faith in the arbitrary will of God used as authority. Wyclif, the realist, stood in opposition to this position of the friars and Scotists. However, in a positive way, Ockham possibly influenced Wyclif in two ways. "Undismayed by the thunder and excommuni-

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1. Green, p.236 cf. Matthew p.III cf. Workman I p.132-134

cations of the church, Ockham had not shrunk in his enthusiasm for the Empire from attacking the foundations of papal supremacy or from asserting the rights of civil power."[1] Also Ockham emphatically insisted that it is the "duty of priests to live in poverty."[2] In Wyclif we find these two tendencies very marked.

The magnitude of Grosseteste's influence upon Wycliff is shown by the fact that there is "no writer save St. Augustine to whose authority he more frequently appeals."[3] From the time when Grosseteste became Bishop of Lincoln in 1235 he was the champion of all that made for national liberty. "His resistance in 1253 to the demands of Rome by his 'sharp epistle' to 'master Innocent', the representative of Innocent IV in England, secured him a Euroepean reputation."[4] But more significant than this in its influence on Wyclif was Grosseteste's constant appeal to the authority of scripture.[5]

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1. Green p.236 cf. Matthew p.III cf. Workman I p.132-134
2. Matthew p. III
3. Workman, I p. 115
4. Workman, I p. 116 Also note "This Epistle is reproduced by Wyclif with Commentary in Civ. Dom. I c.43 pap. 190
5. Workman, I p. 116

The most important influence of Bradwardine upon Wyclif was to confirm him "in that rigid predestinarianism which he had learned together with an abhorence of all Pelagianism, from Augustine. In his earlier writings Wyclif appears to assert human freedom in something more than the equivocal sense in which it is admitted by Augustine. He defines it, with Anslem, as 'the faculty by which an intelligent nature willingly cleaves to rectitude or righteousness.'[2] .....Wyclif by differentiating between contingency and necessity[3] was evidently trying to steer a middle course between the indeterminism of Fitzralph, against which he protests[4] and the predestinarianism of Bradwardine with whom the will of God is accepted as the cause of every action,[5] including sin.[6] Wyclif argued that a man may be in part the determining cause of God's will because that will presupposes that man will act in a particular way. But in later years, though he still did lip service to the doctrine of free will, determinism grew upon him."[7] [8]

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2. Ente 137f, 160ff; Pot. Pap.4,17; (Workman Vol.I p.125)
3. Log.III 194-5; Misc. Phil. I 71f; Dom. Civ.166f.
4. Ente.272f; Dom. Civ. 128
5. Ente Praed. 133, where there are over 20 references to the book & cf. Poole Dom. Div. p.xxix
6. See Wyclif's criticism Dom. Div. F, 125 Opus Evang. I 445-6
7. Dom. Div. 165 cf. Dziewieki, Misc. Phil. I p.xxif;op.min.375
8. Workman Vol.I p.125

When Wyclif was condemned for his teaching on dominion and for his denunciation of the friars Gregory XI and the Council of Constance forgot that Wyclif was but reproducing the doctrine of the honored Irish Archbishop Fitzralph published in a work dedicated of course to Innocent VI. Fitzralph maintained that mendicancy had no warrant in scripture, and that the friars should be denied the right to hear confessions. He published his attack against the friars in his treatise de Pauperie Salvatoris. From this Wyclif got his doctrine of dominion and lordship. "A comparison of the treatise of Fitzralph with the two works of Wyclif de Dominic Divino, and de Civili Dominio shows 'that Wyclif has added no essential element to the doctrine which he read in the work of his predecessor. All he has done -- this in the de Civ. Dom. -- is to carry the inferences logically deducible from that doctrine very much farther than the purpose of Fitzralph's treatise required him to pursue them, and very much farther than it is likely Fitzralph would have pursued them.'"[1]

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1. Workman, I p.131 - quoting Poole in Dom. Div. p.XLVII

Scholastic thought, in general then, influenced Wyclif in four important ways. First of all in all scholastic thought was the appeal to authority. The authorities to whom Wyclif appealed are very significant for his thought. Like Augustine and Grosseteste, whom he quotes more than any other writer, he appealed to the scriptures as final authority. Secondly, Wyclif learned daring and independence of thought from both his predecessors and the spirit of the time. As Green says, "Of all the scholastic doctors those of England had been throughout the keenest and most daring in philosophical speculation; a reckless audacity and love of novelty was the common note of Bacon, Duns Scotus, and Ockham, as against the sober and more disciplined learning of the Parisian schoolmen, Albert and Aquinas. But the decay of the University of Paris during the English wars was transferring her intellectual supremacy to Oxford, and in Oxford Wyclif stood without a rival."[1] Wyclif's spirit of revolt was not an isolated event in a

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1. Green, p. 236

a period of stagnant and uniform thoughts. In scholastic thought "There was never a time when some angel or demon was not stepping down into the pool and troubling its waters. In consequence the history of scholasticism is the record of all sorts of minor heretics, for differences of thought soon became differences of belief. But as a rule these minor heretics were unreal; their beliefs were mere matters of argument vitiated by the tradition of a double truth, or adopted to advertise their Determinations or Quodlibeta. When the sun of official disapproval arose they straightway withered away, for they had no depth of soil. Marsiglio, Ockham, and Wycliff differed from these men, not so much by daring to think for themselves, as by the groundwork of reality which underlay their belief, and by their willingness to push their independence into defiance.....
".....Oxford was in a ferment, and Wyclif's strength lay in his voicing the current intellectual unrest."[1]

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1. Workman, Vol. I p.146

A third important effect of scholastic thought upon Wycliff was his reaction to the nominalistic philosophy of his day. He returned to and went beyond the realism of Aquinas. His realism was so "uncompromising that he averred that whoever denied the reality of universals denied the reality of predestination, of eternal punishment, of the resurrection of the dead, of the law of confession and communion, and the necessity of obedience to the dean of his faculty!"[1] His realism was a protest against Ockham's impossible conceptualism. To Wyclif's earnest nature nominalism was a mere cult of "signs."[2] He could not rest in illusion. For him ideas had a being "intelligible, possible, necessary and eternal."[3] These 'ideas' were the guarantee of the real existence of the world outside, imparting to it their own necessity and continuity. Wyclif's realism was important because it was the root of his conception of the Church, predestination and the Eucharist. He opposed

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1. Workman, I, p. 136
2. Workman, I, p. 137 quoting 'doctors of signs' (Ben Incarn. 170; Apos. 155 Ziz 105,117,125.)
3. Workman, I. p.137 quoting Ente Praed. 41 ; Misc. Phil.II 39.171; Apos. 136,141-2.

the nominalist idea that the church did not exist until after the death of Christ. With Wyclif all that existed had no existence apart from God and all that existed had its origin in God's eternal thought.[1] Thus the church was eternal and predestined. More important, however, was the application of realism to the Eucharist. This realism was the bulwark of his conviction when he held that bread remains bread and wine is still wine, and not the body and blood of Christ after the consecration by the priest. But as Workman says,[2] "'Wyclif's realism appears at its best in his de Benedicta Incarnatione where he opposes the surrent medieval obscuration of the humanity of Christ. " "The Christ of Aquinas is after all not our brother, not a man but only a ghostly similacrum."[3] This tendency was particularly strong among the nominalists of Wyclif's day. "For Wyclif, the humanity of Christ is a most powerful and "most precious jewel," which he will not surrender, in spite of the charges made against him of Arianism."[4]

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1. Workman, I, 138 from Ver. Script.II, 119; Ente Praed. 274; Euch.67, 70, 78. (important)
2. Workman, I, 138-139
3. Workman, I, p.138 quoting Dorner, Person of Christ (I) 333 quoted by Harris, Ben Incarn. 240
4. Workman, I. 139 also note Ben Incarn 23,25,54,78f cf. Netter. Doct. I 207-36.

Wyclif held that nothing human was alien to Christ, that He was liable to all the ills that flesh fell heir to, and that He lived, suffered, died, like all His brethren. "One effect to this exaltation of the humanity of Jesus is seen both in Wyclif and his disciples in their exaltation of humanity at large. The 'Universal Man' is the bond between man and man.[1] There is a genuine, honest, human reality about this application of philosophic realism by Wyclif that makes one feel that his philosophy was rooted in life.

The fourth important and unfortunate influence of scholasticism on Wyclif was its method. The effect Poole[2] puts in this way: To the modern reader #confused by the multiplicity with which, for reasons of symmetry or school etiquette, the same points are proved and re-proved, distinctions are invented, analogies are enforced, the true scope of the work is.....concealed from view. These characteristics are what we expect in the age not only of <u>infina Latinitas</u>, but also of the extreme

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1. Ibid from <u>Ben Incarn.</u>c.13 and pp. 89,101,149; <u>Misc. Phil.</u> II 149-150
2. Poole, <u>De. Dom. Civili</u> XX-XXI

debasement of the scholastic method when logic had ceased to act as a stimulus to the intellectual powers and had become a mere clog upon their exercise, and when no longer framed syllogisms to develop their thought, but argued first, and thought, if at all, afterwards.....his (Wyclif's) formal treatment is of the poorest and most wearisome description; it is only when we reach the special points which he set himself to prove and which he thought he proved by means of all this clumsy groping, that we at all realize the intellectual vigor which, in spite of his method, Wyclif possessed in no contemptible degree, although it is no doubt vain to compare him with the greatest thinkers of the Middle Ages." Workman[1] collaborates this in his statement that, "Wyclif judged as a schoolman, does little more than gyrate on a well-beaten path, often concealing with a cloud of dust and digressions that he is but moving in a circle. His philosophical works contain little or nothing that can claim to be strictly

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1. Workman I. 143

original, with the partial exception of his political doctrine of 'dominion.' That he was serving up once more the old ideas, or rather groping vainly to adapt the old wine skins to hold the heady mist of his new thoughts, may account for his being 'perhaps the most intricate and obscure of all the scholastic host.'"[1] This is also what Workman means when he says, "As we listen to his theories the voice is the voice of revolution, but the hands are the hands of a vanished past."[2]

And yet Wyclif transcended this scholastic impediment. "In his theological writings we are conscious of a higher note; Wyclif was tired of mere sophistical discussion, and urged that 'we schoolmen' should seek for 'necessary truth' instead of making futile efforts 'to teach impossible conclusions from impossible premises.'"[3] In his Latin sermons and later writings this new outlook is predominant. And "as he abandons Latin for English the academic disputant whose style and matter is medieval passes with ease into the

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1. Rashdall, Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages II.541
2. Workman I.4
3. Ben Incarn. 77, 116, 165 quoted by Workman I.135

pamphleteer whose outlook and appeal are to a new world, in essence an English world....."[1] The style of these English discourses is simple and direct,[2] in contrast to the involved disquisition of his older Latin works. It was this transcendence of scholasticism that made Wyclif the great man that he was. Scholastic method was only useless baggage. The great importance of Wyclif's position as a schoolman was only the eminence it gave him in his day. Even Knighton, an unfriendly chronicler, says that, "he was second to none in philosophy and without peer in the learning of the schools."[3] Schaff says, "Wyclif was beyond dispute the most eminent scholar who taught for any length of time at Oxford since Grosseteste....."[4] And Workman says, "....the first of the Reformers was not only the last of the schoolmen but the last outcome of the intellectual vigour of a great medieval university. The century which followed the triumph of Courtney and Arundel is the most barren in her annals."[5] ".....the importance of Wyclif's

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1. Workman I.4
2. Schaff, V. Part II p.328
3. Matthew - Eng. Wks. Hitherto unknown p.111
4. Schaff V Pt. II p.326
5. Workman II.375

attack upon the medieval church lay in the fact that the assault was conducted not by an obscure fanatic but by the foremost schoolman of his age --the 'flower', as his enemies owned, 'of Oxford'-- at a time when the decay of Paris had left Oxford without a rival."[1]

C. National Consciousness.

The third great force in the background of Wyclif's life was the growing national consciousness of the English people. Previous to the beginning of the Hundred Year's War in 1339 the English people had been divided into factions led by great Barons more conscious of their own provincial interests than of the interest of the nation. With the Hundred Years War, however, and the success of English arms a new national pride became noticeable among Englishmen. "When in the year 1360 the Treaty of Bretigny made over to the English Crown a third of the country which we now know as France, English seamanship was as supreme in Western waters as

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1. Workman I.4 quoting Eulog. Cont. III p.345

English arms on the Western continent. From Corunna to Rotterdam no harbour-master dared to pilfer or annoy the traders who brought English wool, no foreign craft dared board the vessels that sailed beneath the cross of St. George. From the border where Christendom lay encamped against Islam in the shadow of the Sierra Nevada, to the utmost Bohemian forests, there had been found no chivalry able to contend with the archers of England. 'I witnessed' says Froissart, 'the haughtiness of the English who are affable to no other nation than their own; no gentlemen of Gascony or Aquitaine .... could obtain office or appointment in their own country; for the English said they were neither on a level with them nor worthy of their society, which made the Gascons very indignant.'".[1] Knowing this it is not hard to understand the English loss of respect for the French Pope. "The papal registers of the Avignon period, which record the appeals sent to the English King to conclude peace with France, almost

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1. Trevelyan, p.2

always mention terms that would have made France the gainer. At the outbreak of the war, 1339, Edward III proudly complained that it broke his heart to see the French troops were paid in part with papal funds."[1] Clement VI was the most unscrupulous of these popes. He reserved for himself and his curia the richest benefices in England. "England's very enemies, Merinuth continues, were put in possession of England's revenues, and the proverb became current at Avignon that the English were double asses bearing all the burdens heaped upon them. This prodigal Frenchman threatened Edward III with excommunication and the land with interdict, if resistance to his appointments did not cease and if their revenues continued to be withheld. The pope died in 1353, before the date set for the wrathful execution. While France was being made England by English arms, the Italian and French ecclesiastes were making conqaest of England's resources."[2] The great intensity of the English national loyalty is indicated by the

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1. Schaff V, part II, p. 309 and note.
2. Schaff V, part II, p. 313

determination with which they overcame their superstition of the Pope's power. Parliament protested year after year against the Pope's power to appoint alien absentees to benefices in England, and to collect huge sums from the churches, while the church was free from state tax. In 1279 the Statute of Mortmain forbade alienation of lands from tax by the secular power. In 1307 the Statute of Carlyle forbade aliens to take money from England. In 1343 the Parliament protested against appointment of aliens to English living, and in 1353 the Statute of Provisors forbade all papal provisions, reservations and all taxations of church property contrary to the customs of England. The power of the pope was great enough to keep these statutes from being enforced, however. Parliament protested year after year. This conflict was going on when Wyclif came on the scene. John of Gaunt led this anti-papal party in the government. It is not known how or Why Wyclif got into the service of the government in this struggle against the pope. However, Wyclif was a member of

the mission to Bruges in 1374 to negotiate with the pope for John of Gaunt. The result was that the pope remained unharmed and Wyclif received the rectory of Lutterworth in return for his services. However, from that time on Wyclif was a prominent patriot. In his writings he "frequently complained that the pope was in league with the enemies of the English Kingdom.'"[1] It seems clear, then, that Wyclif's break with the papacy and the authority of the Catholic Church came in the first instance primarily from political and patriotic causes rather than from purely religious motives. Wyclif "represents the patriotic element in all its strength," says Schaff.[2] And it was primarily because he was of this element that Wyclif came into conflict with the Church headed by a corrupt French pope.

D. The Individual Awakening.

The fourth important force that influenced Wyclif was a growing individualism. This was caused

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1. Schaff V, Part II, p. 309 - quoting De Ecclesia p.332
2. Schaff V, Part II, p.313

by the depletion of the population by the Black Plague of 1349, by the rise of the towns, by the widened outlook given to many who went to the continent to fight in the Hundred Year's War, by the decay of feudalism, by the increased importance of the common man given by the supremacy of archery over knighthood proved at Crecy. The Black Plague was the most important cause of the new independent outlook of the common man. The plague reduced the population one fourth[1] and made laborers so scarce that crops rotted in the fields. Wages became very high. The serf or villain who, in the old feudal system was bound almost as a slave to his overlord, found his services to be in great demand. The temptation to make higher wages took precedence over duties to overlords and many serfs and villeins ran away to towns or other sections of the country where they could get higher wages. This new independence was counteracted by the Statute of Laborers in 1351, ordering laborers to stay with their masters. But this taste of

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1. Green, p.247

freedom and independence only whetted the appetite of the lower classes for a larger share of liberty and wealth that they were gradually gaining as feudalism was breaking down. The people became more and more impatient of the feudal services that they were required to give to their overlords and it became harder and harder to enforce these services. The result was that finally, instead of laboring for his landlord, the tenant was allowed to pay a money rent.[1] This gave him new wealth and independence. In the towns this new wealth and freedom as even more marked. The political power of these two elements was fortunately combined when the knights of the shire and the burghers joined together as the Commons and separated from the rest of Parliament by 1341.[2] Through this body the rights of the people were voiced again and again against both State and Church. Then, however, they did not have the power to enforce their demands -- witnessed by the failure of the Peasant Revolt of 1381.

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1. Green, p.247
2. Green, p. 232

It is important to notice that the right and independence of the Commons was recognized but it is still more important to know their demands -- especially concerning our subject, the Catholic Church. It is evidence of the general discontent of the people. "In 1371, this jealousy of the clergy found vent in a petition of the Commons that the great offices of the state should be taken from the bishops who held them and entrusted to lay hands.[1] In the same year the taxation of the clergy was made heavier, and special attention was directed to the lands held by the religious which, having come into Mortmain since 1291, were subject to pay their share of a lay subsidy.[2] A passage quoted by Dr. Shirley[3] from Wyclif's treatise on Dominion makes it appear that the confiscation of endowments to support the war was spoken of seriously in Parliament.

"In the following year distrust of Avignon was roused anew by the advent of a papal collector

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1. Matthew VIII from Rot. Parl. II.304
2. Ibid from Stubb's Const. Hist. II.423
3. Ibid from Shirley's Fasc. Ziz. XXI

one Arnold Guarnerius. He was compelled to take an oath to be loyal to the King, to keep the council informed as to all letters, papal or others, that he received and neither to send money out of the realm, nor to leave it himself without special license.[1] Still more significative of the temper of the Commons is a petition of this year praying the King to deprive any beneficed priest or curate who lives openly with a concubine; if after six months the Ordinary had failed to do so.[2] Evidently the times were changed since Becket carried the popular voice with him in claiming freedom from the lay courts for clergymen even when guilty of crime.'"[3]

This social unrest also found expression in popular harangues, poems and tracts. The catch-word of the day was "When Adam delved and Eve span who was then a gentleman?" Some poor parish priests exemplified in John Ball, the leader of the Peasants Revolt, seem to have been among the leaders in

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1. Ibid, from Rymer III p.II 933
2. Ibid. from Rot. Parl. II . 314
3. Matthew VIII

expressing the popular unrest. The most important tract of the period is Langland's Piers Plowman. Besides his expression of the demands of the people for relief from oppression and for freedom it is interesting for us to note that he also pictures the questioning spirit of the people in religious matters. "Langland complained, some years before Wyclif rose to fame, that the upper classes were in the habit of discussing the mysteries of religion among themselves ' as if they were clergy.'

> 'At meat in their mirths, when the minstrels are still,
> Then tell they of the Trinity a tale or two,
> And bring forth a bald reason and quote St. Bernard,
> And put forth a presumption to prove the sooth.
> Thus they drivel at their dais the deity to know,
> And gnaw God with the gorge when their gut is full.'

He describes how they call in question the justice of condemning all mankind for the fault of Adam, and how they 'carp against clerk's crabbed words.'"[1]

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1. Trevelyan, p.312 from Piers Plowman, B, X 52-7, 101-16

Workman says of Wyclif, "Like most of his countrymen he would pride himself on his undoubted independence of outlook."[1] No one can study his life without noting that this characteristic is particularly prominent in him. Here, however, we are particularly interested in noticing his sympathy with the lower classes in their demands for liberty and justice. "He was not afraid to avow his sympathy with the serfs' demand for freedom, and his anger at the oppression of the upper classes. 'Strife, contests and debates ben used in our land, for lord striven with their tenants to bring them in thraldom more than they shoulden by reason and charity. Also lords many times do wrong to poor men by extortions and unreasonable amercements and unreasonable taxes and take poor men's good and payen not therefore but with sticks (tallies), and despisen them and menace and sometimes beat them when they ask their pay. And thus lords devour poor men's goods in gluttony and waste and pride, and they perish for

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1. Workman I.26

mischief and hunger and thirst and cold, and their children also. And if their rent be not readily paid their beast ben distressed, and they pursued without mercy, though they been never so poor and needy....and so in a manner they eat and drink poor men's flesh and blood, and ben man-quellers, as God complaineth by his prophets.'"[1]

The extent to which Wyclif carried his concern for the individual in his religious ideas certainly mirrors the new spirit of individualism arising in his time. "We note the individualism of Wyclif's system. The organic whole finds little or no place; every man stands face to face with the will of God; individualism permeates every act of his life. All his judgments and obligations are determined by this supreme fact. Calvin starting from the same premises rectified his individualism by his conception of the church; with Wyclif there was no such antidote. The only check upon the individual judgment is the conformity of the same with scripture. Popes and curia may err, but

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1. Trevelyan, p.201 quoting Matthew p.233-234

the Scripture will unerringly guide us. But Wyclif neither raised nor answered the question who is to decide the interpretation of Scripture, a problem less born in upon him as he lived before the days of criticism, higher or lower as a result of this individualism, with its negotiation of sacerdotalism, we may allow that no one, not even Luther, gave the laity such a place in his church system."[1] [2]

With these four great forces, Catholicism, Scholasticism, Nationalism and Individualism in mind as forming the background of Wyclif's life and thinking let us now sketch his life briefly in order that we may have a better understanding of the relation of his reform ideas in the perspective of his own life and times.

E. Sketch of Wyclif's Life.

First let it be noted that "almost every particular in the life of Wyclif 'is the occasion of

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1. Buddensieg in Pol. Works I p.XV
2. Workman II p.19-20

controversy; over his early years there hangs a more than medieval history; while the vague chronology of his life is in marked contrast to our exact knowledge of his teaching."[1] The date of Wyclif's birth cannot be fixed. The guesses of scholars range between 1320 and 1330. The date most commonly accepted has been 1324, but Workman who had examined the evidence more thoroughly than any other scholar I have read prefers the date 1328.[2] One of the few certainties of Wyclif's life, however, is that he was a Yorkshire man of North Riding.[3] Yorkshire was noted for its few serfs and for the general independence and slight angularity of its people. Both characteristics are patent in Wyclif. The particular place of Wyclif's birth is uncertain. Wycliffe-on-Tees is the most probable.[4]

The next thing of importance that we know of in Wyclif's life is his going to Oxford. He probably entered here about 1345.[5] Nothing much of his early student life is known except the general characteristics of student life in those

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1. Workman Vol. I p. 1
2. Ibid I.21
3. Ibid I.22
4. Ibid I.22
5. Ibid I.52

days and the interruptions of his school work by the Black Death in 1349, the death of his father in 1353, and the St. Scholastica Riots in 1355.

In about 1358, at thirty years of age, Wyclif became Master of Balliol College, Oxford.[1] In 1361 he took his degree of Master of Arts. In the same year he was instituted as rector of Fillingham and left Balliol College.[2] In the next year Oxford University in its annual 'roll of masters' petitioned Urban V for a prebend for Wyclif. He received as a result the prebend of Aust as a sort of fellowship.[3] The custom was very prevalent and Wyclif did not to excite censure in accepting it. In 1363 Wyclif obtained from his bishop, John Buckingham, a license for non-residence at Fillingham that he might devote himself to the study of letters in the university.[4]

Two years after Wyclif's return to Oxford in 1365, Urban V made his demand for tribute which parliament refused.[5] In the latter part of the same

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1. Ibid I.68
2. Ibid I. 77,79,80.
3. Ibid I. 152-153.
4. Workman Vol. I.153
5. Ibid I.218

year Wyclif was made Warden of Canterbury by Archbishop Islip.[1] His tenure of office, however, was brief; about five months after Wyclif's appointment Islip died and his successor, Simon Langham, a Benedictine, 'considering that the government of the college by a secular was a great prejudice to the monks of Canterbury', deprived Wyclif of his Wardenship.[2] Wyclif appealed to Urban V but it was of no avail. Urban referred the matter to Cardinal Androin with power to act and in 1370 Langham's action was confirmed. In 1368 Buckingham renewed Wyclif's license to absent himself for two more years from his rectory of Fillingham while he continued his studies at the University of Oxford.[3] A few months later Wyclif exchanged his rectory of Fillingham in Lincolnshire for the rectory of Ludgershall in Buckinghamshire.[4] Ludgershall was nearer Oxford. The next year, March 1369, Wyclif obtained his Bachelor of Divinity degree at Oxford.[5]

In 1370 Wyclif prepared as his treatise on

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1. Ibid I.177
2. Ibid I.180
3. Ibid I.195
4. Ibid I.195
5. Ibid I.97, 201 n.

Sentences of Peter Lombard necessary for his Doctor's degree, his de Benedicta Incarnacione. In this treatise first appear his doubts concerning the Eucharist, He does not openly break away from current views but "maintains there must be a subject underlying the accidents though what that subject is he cannot tell, nor is the definition necessary 'for the faith of pilgrims.'"[1] As a 'sententairy' Wyclif had to take an oath that he would teach nothing unorthodox. Perhaps this accounts for his reserve in the treatise. In 1372 before receiving his D.D. Wyclif had to deliver a series of sermons before the University. These Latin sermons are all orthodox, almost without question.[2] Upon the completion of his Doctor's degree, about the autumn of 1372, probably on recommendation of the University, Gregory XI promised Wyclif a canonry in Lincoln, also giving him permission to retain the prebend in Aust in Westbury.[3] The promise of a canonry in Lincoln was never fulfilled, however. "The truth seems to be that very shortly after his first grant

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1. Workman I.140 from Ben Incarn. 190-191
2. Ibid II.207
3. Ibid II.203

for a reservation, doubts began to be entertained at Oxford as to his orthodoxy, and in July 1373, or whenever the de Ente was published, Wyclif's enemies at Oxford began to threaten him with deprivation of his reservation. In December, 1373, however, the reservation as we have seen, was renewed, but Wyclif's opponents took care that Gregory should display no anxiety to fulfill his promise."[1]

There is some question as to the date when Wyclif entered the service of the Crown. The only absolutely sure date is 1374 when Wyclif took part in the mission to Burges.[2] Lechler and Schaff are of the opinion that Wyclif appeared as one of the royal chaplains in 1366 while Loserth and Rashdall place his appearance in the Royal Service in 1376.[3] Workman, however, believes that Wyclif entered the service of the Crown shortly before obtaining his doctor's degree,[4] -- probably in 1371 or 1372. His opinion is based on a tract written before Wyclif's

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1. Ibid. I.205 also note 4
2. Ibid I.240
3. Schaff V part II p.316
4. Workman Vol. I.209

doctorate which "taunts him with having become of the house of Herod (Lancaster)"[1] and on references which Wyclif makes to speeches in Parliament which he himself heard in 1371[2] Workman's conclusion seems more probable to me.

"We know little of the circumstances or reasoning which led 'the flower of Oxford Scholarship' to throw himself into the struggle of politics. But Wyclif probably could not do otherwise. We know that he was already committed to a doctrine of disestablishment;[3] if he desired that this should not remain mere theory it was necessary that he become more than a schoolman.[4] Workman is of the opinion that Wyclif threw himself into the political struggle in order to reform the church through the state,--witnessed by the preceding quotation and by the following in which he refers to "....Wyclif's belief that he could best help the cause he had at heart by attaching himself to the service of the Crown."[5] This seems to me to

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1. Ibid I.209 note 1
2. Ibid I.210
3. Ibid I.212 note Compare Op. Min. 402 with Ziz. 4
4. Ibid I.212
5. Ibid I.211

be a bit of romancing. In the first place it is more probable that the King would ask him to enter the service rather than Wyclif 'throw himself into the struggle. Secondly, I think it credits Wyclif with a more militant reforming spirit at this time than there is evidence to show that he had. I think it is better to think and stick to the plain fact that he was a member of the deputation to Burges in 1374 representing John of Guant in negotiation with th representatives of Gregory XI concerning the tribute which was over thirty years[1] in arrears and which the English refused to pay. Wyclif was the only theologian in the mission.[2] Since he was chosen to be in the deputation it is a safe inference that he was known to be a patriot opposed to the pope. However, in the actual conference, Wyclif's opinion, if expressed at all, must have been as unwelcome to Edward as to Gregory, for Wyclif was left in the background and soon retired again to Oxford.[3] No matter what Parliament wanted, the Crown was not

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1. Schaff V Part II p.316
2. Workman I.240
3. Ibid I.245

in earnest in the negotiation. The King needed money and the easiest way to get it was to plunder the wealthiest benefices of the English Church. This could be done more easily by arrangement with the pope than by English consent.[1] This first conference was unsuccessful. The pope was too slow in coming to terms and Edward III to stimulate his interest, in April 1375, levied a tenth on all the benefices of cardinals held in England and by a prohibition in the previous November of any attempt to procure provisions 'to the prejudice of the King.'[2] The result was the renewal of negotiations and a new deputation was appointed to return to Bruges. It is very significant to note that Wyclif was not included in this mission, especially as his former colleagues were retained as subordinates.[3] The conference did not accomplish much. The most important result was that "the pope abandoned for the future his claim to the reservation of English church livings; but the King was also bound on his side, to abstain

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1. Ibid I.246
2. Ibid I.246
3. Ibid I.246

in the future from conferring church dignities by brief of Quare impedit."[1]

In the meantime Wyclif had remained at Oxford and his living of Lutterworth which the Crown had presented to him in 1374 before setting out on the mission to Bruges. He had resigned his living at Ludgershall as a result. In 1375 his prebend of Aust was again confirmed and then withdrawn and given to another from whom it was soon taken away and probably given again to Wyclif, so that he held it until his death in 1384.[2] It is interesting to note that although Wyclif denounced absentee holders of livings he himself held this prebend of Aust in Westbury. He seems to have provided it properly with a vicar, however, for none of his enemies point out any inconsistency. It is also worthy of note that in 1373 Gregory XI had promised to give Wyclif a canonry in Lincoln as soon as vacancies occured.[3] In 1375 there were two vacancies and Wyclif was superseded in both.

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1. Ibid I.246
2. Workman I.169-171
3. Ibid I.205-206

The second of them, the prebend of Caistor, Wyclif wanted especially. "Judging from his complaint it is clear that Wyclif thought himself entitled to this and seems to have put himself to some expense to obtain it."[1] But so far from receiving it, or being dispossesed of it later because he refused to pay the first fruits, it was granted to Philip de Thornbury[2] .....and though Wyclif calls him 'Ydiota' he was really a man of some ability and standing."[3] Not long after this Wyclif's quarrel began with the Church, and instead of fulfilling his grant Gregory condemned Wyclif's Conclusions in a series of bulls. One cannot say what would have been the result if Gregory had given Wyclif a bemefice. But one can say that, since Wyclif wanted a benefice, and did not receive it, his patriotic antipathy toward the pope would be increased rather than softened."

The pope's condemnation of Wyclif's Conclusions came about in this way. After Wyclif

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1. Ibid I.206 note 3 Civ. Dom. I 387, 'ad sumptus non modicos.'
2. Ibid I.206 note 4
3. Ibid I.206

had returned from Bruges in 1374 " a disillusioned man"[1] he retired to Oxford, "preferring to fall back upon his academic position for the advancement of his ideas, to which, henceforth, he tells us, he would devote his life."[2] His recent experiences seemed to have shown him the need of making clear the foundations of thought upon which action must rest. At this time, October 1374, he probably began his Determinatio a skeleton of his later, larger works, the treatises on Divine and Civil Dominion. Some writers, Shirley for instance, believe Wyclif wrote this work before his being chosen to go to Bruges, or even as far back as 1366. Workman, however, basing his opinion on evidence unknown to the others and on a larger perspective of Wyclif's total work, is of the belief that the Determinatio was written after Wyclif's return to Oxford as a result of a controversy in the school.[3] By the beginning of 1376 Wyclif had enlarged his works the Divine and Civil Dominion.[4]

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1. Workman I.257
2. Ibid I 257 note 2 See striking preface to Dom. Div.
3. Ibid I.257-258
4. Ibid I 258

had to survive from Bryden in 1974 " a distinctional mind" he retired to Darrad, "preferring to fall back upon his essential conviction that the advantage of life lies, so which, henceforth, he valued the world devoid his life." His modest expectations proved to have been the need of making clear the foundations of thought upon which better must rest. At this time, Dewey (1967) he probably began his investigation a definition of his later larger works, the treatises on Ethics and Logic. Some writers, Dewey can therefore believe Hegel were this work before the years chosen by Ratner, or even as far back as 1884. However, having his version on evidence returned to the volume and be a larger consideration of Hegel's first work, is of the belief that the interpretation was written after Dewey's return to Michigan as a result of a controversy in the school. In the beginning of 1894 Hegel published his works the Ethics and Logic Dewey.

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[illegible]
[illegible]

This publication was followed by his de Daemonio Moridiano, a bitter attack upon the prelates for their worldliness and oppression of the poor.[1] Wyclif's scheme of disendowment of the church by the state, and perhaps his popularity attracted John Gaunt at the head of the court party. "The duke made Wyclif's scheme of disendowment ------- 'not robbery by restitution' ---- peculiarly his own, untrammelled by Wyclif's social aims or spiritual desires, but with far clearer insight into the consequences. He saw his chance of doubling his estate and of gaining over a greedy baronage by prospect of spoil. So for years John of Gaunt and his clique made use of the reformer and his pen, while Wyclif, either too high-souled to see the selfish aims of his allies, or else so intent on the realization of his ideals that he was willing to avail himself of every weapon that fell into his hands, used their protection to push his "doctrines."[2] At any rate, in September 1376 Wyclif, at John of Gaunt's request, preached before

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1. Ibid I.278
2. Workman I.278

the court.[1] This seems to have been the beginning of an alliance to which both for some years were loyal. Workman says, "We frankly own that the alliance was a mistake for both parties,"[2] for as a result the"duke consolidated against himself the might of the episcopate, with Courtenay at their head" and "Wyclif on the other hand, by thus allying himself with an unscrupulous politician, lost the support of the people."[3] All that John of Gaunt gained was a theoretical justification for authority over the church, while Wyclif only gained temporary support of the dominant court party whose protection enabled him to speak his mind without danger to himself. For a time, too, Wyclif's alliance with the duke would gain for him the support of the duke's special henchmen -- the friars.[4] So far Wyclif had not attacked the friars, rather he had shown sympathy with their doctrine of poverty. Perhaps it was to get control of the friars who had a great hold on public opinion by their ceaseless journeying over the country, by their preaching, and by

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1. Ibid I.279
2. Ibid I.279
3. Ibid I.279
4. Ibid I.281-282

their private confessions that Wyclif allied himself with John of Gaunt.

Following upon this new friendship between the duke and himself, Wyclif began a campaign of preaching against the abuses in the hierarchy of the church, the luxury and worldliness of the clergy, especially the episcopate. He employed himself "running about, as the old chronicler has it, from place to place, and barking against the Church."[1] It was not long, however, before the hierarchy of the church made plans to silence Wyclif. He had begun preaching in the fall of 1376 and Archbishop Courtenay summoned him to appear before the bishops in St. Paul's in February 1377.[2] John of Gaunt, however, took the attack on Wyclif as an attack on himself and attended the trial with Wyclif, accompanied by four friars (one from each order) and the King's marshal, Henry Percy. At the trial Courtenay commanded Wyclif to stand while the duke commanded that he should be seated.

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1. Schaff Vol. V Part II p.316 (Chron. Angl. p.115 sqq)
2. Workman I.286 and note 2

John threatened to bring down the pride of all the bishops in England and upon Courtenay's reply that his trust was in God, the duke swore he would drag him out by the hair of his head. At this point a riot of the Londoners broke up the Assembly. The riot was probably not so much because of the insult to the bishop as because on that morning a bill had been introduced in Parliament proposing to take the government of London out of the mayor's hands and to give it in charge to a captain appointed by the King's marshall, Lord Percy, who was much disliked.[1] What Wyclif thought we do not know. "He does not mention the scene in any of his works, though he speaks much of his later persecutions. In the roaring crowd of infuriated lords, bishops and citizens, he stood silent, and he stands silent still."[2]

About this time some opponents sent fifty-one conclusions of Wyclif that seemed blameworthy to Pope Gregory for examination. Gregory

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1. Ibid I.287
2. Trevelyan p.45 also note 1 - Chron. Angl. 118-121

selected eighteen erroneous propositions and issued a series of bulls against Wyclif on May 22 1377.[1] The first bull ordered the bishop to verify whether Wyclif taught these errors, and if so to imprison him until further orders. The second bull advised Sudbury and Courtenay to cite Wyclif to Rome in case he resisted or tried to escape. A third required the Chancellor of the University of Oxford, upon pain of all loss of privileges for the University to guard against erroneous doctrines and deliver Wyclif and his followers by arrest to Sudbury and Courtenay. In another bull the pope urges Sudbury and Courtenay to point out to the government that Wyclif's teachings are not only contrary to the faith but dangerous to the government.[2] And finally in a letter to the king he praises the kingdom for its illustrious piety and the defenders of the faith it has produced and urges Edward to protect his commissioners in the persecution of Wyclif who is seeking 'to overthrow the status of the whole church,' by

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1. Workman I.293 also notes 4 & 5
2. Workman I.297

teaching identical with the 'opinions and ignorant doctrines of Marsiglio of Padua and John of Jandun of cursed memory.'[1]

Before the publication of these bulls Wyclif had, by a state paper given his opinion upon the request of the Council of the new government under Richard that the papal collector, Garnier, should not be permitted to take any more gold from England. He appealed to three laws: the law of nature, the law of the gospel and the law of conscience. The first stands upon England's power of self-defence, the second on which all almsgiving in case of necessity ceases of itself to be a duty binding by the law of love. He quotes St. Bernard as authority. The law of conscience requires kings and rulers to look after the nation's welfare first of all. This gold, if allowed to leave the land, would be used by England's enemies, "while Englishmen would be laughed at by foreigners for their 'asinine stupidity.'"[2]

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1. Ibid I.297
2. Workman I.303 also for whole paragraph.

During this time the contents of the papal bulls became known, though not yet published, and Wyclif wrote a tract in which he called upon all 'soldiers of Christ, seculars and clerics and especially the professors of evangelical poverty, the defenders even unto death of the law of God,' to resist the papal claim to bind and loose.[1] Such a claim he said makes the pope 'the enemy of the church of Christ, and the worst antichrist. "Though personally polite to the pope, he claims the pope must be judged by his conformity to the rule of scripture, 'that he live soberly, justly and piously in evangelical poverty.'"[2]

When he had published this tract Parliament had adjourned and Wyclif returned to Oxford. Much controversy was aroused over the tract and Sudbury and Courtenay deemed it no longer imprudent to publish the papal bulls.[3] They were published in December 1377. The Chancellor was called upon to send a statement as to whether Wyclif taught the

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1. Ibid I.305
2. Ibid I.305
3. Ibid I.305

theses in question. To meet the dilemna he was at a loss as to what to do. " 'So the friends of the said John Wyclif and John himself, took counsel in the congregation of regents and non-regents that they should not imprison a man of the King of England at the command of the pope, lest they should deem to give the pope lordship and regal authority in England. But since it was needful to do something at the pope's orders, as it seemed to the university on taking counsel, the vice-chancellor, who was a monk, asked Wyclif and ordered him to stay in Black Hall and not to go out because he wished no one else to arrest him. Wyclif agreed to do so because he had sworn to the university to preserve its privileges.'"[1] And instead of sending a sealed report concerning Wyclif's teachings to the commissioners the chancellor "'for all, and by the assent of all, declared publicly in the schools that Wyclif's theses were true though they sounded badly to the ear.'"[2]

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(1) Workman I.306 quoting Eulog. Cont. III 348
2. Ibid I.306

Wyclif did not escape Sudbury and Courtenay, however, for in the spring he was summoned before Sudbury at Lambeth. He was saved, however, by a message to the court from the Queen-mother just before the trial, ordering the bishops to refrain from pronouncing any judgment, though not forbidding them to hold the court. Wyclif defended his Conclusions with a written statement entitled Protestation. The trial was a farce and was given up as useless after a crowd from London broke into the chapel and with menacing applause signified their sympathy with Wyclif. The court had to be satisfied with probiting Wyclif from teaching or preaching such erroneous theses because of the scandal to the laity.[1]

Soon after the trial, still in the spring of 1378, Wyclif published his de Veritas Scripturae. Wyclif's final authority in all cases was Scripture. For most people of his day the pope was final authority. But Wyclif saw beyond that. He saw that

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1. Ibid. I.308-309 -- for whole paragraph.

in reality the Bible was the final authority of the church. This authority, then, he considered final for his own beliefs, and to make clear the truth and finality of this authority he wrote this treatise, with which we shall deal more fully in the second part of the paper. In the summer of the same year Wyclif published his Protestatio, Libellus, his XXXIII Conclusions, and his Letter of Excuse to Urban. In this same summer the Great Schism began and the Haulay and Shakyl breach of sanctuary took place. In the fall Wyclif appeared before Parliament in defence of the King's officers for entering Westminster to arrest two criminals, Haulay and Shakyl, who had taken the refuge of sanctuary there. Wyclif held that "God's Law provided no refuge for criminals and debtors."[1]

Following upon this in the winter of 1378 Wyclif published two more works, the de Ecclesia and de Officio Regis. Since the publication of the papal bulls Wyclif felt the need of setting forth

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1. Workman I.323

In reality the State's [illegible] authority of the church. This authority, [illegible] be considered final for his own subjects, and to make clear the [illegible] and finality of the church's authority he wrote this treatise, [illegible] which he spoke [illegible] being [illegible] in the second part of the chapter. In the summary of the [illegible] Marsilius modified the Aristotelian [illegible] Politics, in [illegible] Conciliarism, and the [illegible] of Ockham. In this sense Gerson [illegible] Great Schism [illegible] and [illegible] forms of monetary [illegible] plans. In the first [illegible] appeared before Parliament in defence of the King's [illegible] for [illegible] at two [illegible], Henry and Joanna, who had taken the [illegible] of monetary [illegible]. Gerson's [illegible] that "God's law provided no [illegible] for [illegible] and [illegible]."

Politics [illegible] in the [illegible] of [illegible] published two more works, the [illegible] and [illegible]. Since the [illegible] of the [illegible] Gerson's [illegible] the head of [illegible]

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1. Gerson I, [illegible]

in detail his views concerning the constitution of the church. In de Ecclesia he gathered together in a formal style various tracts, protestations and pamphlets he had previously written on this theme. In this he included the statement he had made to the Parliament at Gloucester concerning the case of Haulay and Shakyl and the breach of sanctuary. Soon after this Wyclif published his de Officio Regis in which he set forth his conception of the church and state. He started with a statement by his opponents that 'civil dominion is a perfection.'[1] Therefore, he concluded it must belong to the most perfect part of the church. Furthermore, he held that the dignity of the King was derived directly from God and was therefore independent of the church.[2] This he proved by the fact that Christ was born under and recognized the civil power of the Roman emperor.

Wyclif published two more works soon after this, in the spring of 1379, his Protestatio

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1. Ibid II.20
2. Workman II.20

Pape and de Ordine Christiano. The Schism had taken place the previous fall and in the de Protestate Papae Wyclif completes his breach with the papacy. He says the rivalry of the two Schismatic popes marks them as antichrist and that Christendom would be better governed by a council than by an endowed papacy.[1] In his de Ordine Christiano (so entitled by mistake) Wyclif summarized his objections to the papacy for popular appeal. He brings every possible objection against the papacy and concludes that it is unnecessary for the Church.[2]

In the summer of 1379 Wyclif began a school controversy on the nature of the Eucharist which culminated in his publishing the de Apostasia and de Eucharistia in the fall. In both books Wyclif set forth approximately the same ideas concerning the sacrament. The de Apostasia, however, was written especially to persuade the friars that they would not be apostates if they left their 'private religions' and took up the religion of Christ. The

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1. Ibid II.75
2. Ibid II.78

Eucharistia aimed at a more formal exposition concerning the Eucharist and other related sacraments. He held to the real presence of Christ in the sacrament but denied that the bread and wine actually changed into the body and blood of Christ. He held that the sacrament was efficatious only if administered by a priest of good character, and that confession to God was of more avail than confession to apriest.[1] Up until this time the friars in general had not opposed Wyclif, but they took this attack upon the sacraments as an attack upon themselves and from this time on we find them in opposition to Wyclif.

In the spring of 1380, about the time that Workman thinks Wyclif, with the help of friends, began his translation of the Bible, the controversy over the sacrament of the Eucharist came to a head at Oxford. The seculars, for the most part, took Wyclif's side against the monks and friars. Berton, the chancellor of Oxford, was in opposition to Wyclif.

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1. Workman II. 41-44 -- for paragraph.

He summoned a council of twelve doctors made up of six friars, four seculars and two monks to pass judgment on twelve conclusions taken from Wyclif's writings. Wyclif was condemned by seven votes. The four seculars, led by Rigg, and one other voted for Wyclif.[1] In defence Wyclif, instead of appealing to the congregation of Regent Masters, as was his privilege, appealed to the King. In answer John of Gaunt hurried down to Oxford and urged Wyclif to be silent. Wyclif refused. He had chosen to be loyal to conscience though king, pope and university opposed him. To confirm his decision and make clear his position he published early in 1381 another treatise against 'the sects of the signs' which he entitled his Confessio.[2]

After publishing the Confessio, at about the beginning of the Peasant Revolt, it seems that Wyclif retired from Oxford to his rectory at Lutterworth. Here he remained until the spring of 1382. He may have been ill, and perhaps, with the

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1. Ibid II.141-142 for paragraph, part preceding.
2. Ibid II.145-146 for second half of paragraph.

help of his devoted adherents, he may have continued the work of translating the Bible during this time. Workman thinks he did.[1] In the fall of 1381 he also wrote a defence of the peasants in his treatise on Servants and Lords.[2]

Before March 1382, however, he returned to the battlefield in earnest with the publication of his de Blasphemia, "an exceeding bitter attack on the whole established order of the church."[3] In it he denounces all orders of officials in the church both major and minor. Popes, cardinals, bishops, archdeacons and friars are all attacked with unusual invective. He protests against the use of the inferior clergy in secular charges as 'clerks of the privy seal, petty bag, and kitchen.'[4] Not satisfied with mere verbal expression Wyclif followed this with an appeal to Parliament (assembled in May 1382) in which he tried to persuade Parliament to carry out his principle of the superiority of the state. "England, he claimed, should obey no prelate,

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1. Workman II.147
2. Ibid II.243
3. Ibid II. 249
4. Ibid II. 249

unless such obedience agreed with Christ's law. Money should not be sent to Rome unless it could be proved by Scripture to be due. The third point, that no man, 'whether cardinal or other' should enjoy any benefice in England unless resident and employed legitimately -- is a plea for the effective carrying out of the Statutes of Provisors. His fourth command was intended to appeal to the Commons. He claimed that the new commonwealth should not be burdened with new tallages 'until the endowments of the clergy had been exhausted". Once more he emphasized the duty of the King to confiscate the temporalities of any bishop, 'living notoriously in contempt of God.' As a further petition he insisted that the King should employ neither 'bishop nor curate' in secular business. Wyclif concluded with the demand that no one should be imprisoned because excommunicated unless it be proved that the sentence is according to God's law."[1] Along with this formal petition Wyclif published a Complaint.[2] In it he asks permission

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1. Workman II.251
2. Arnold, Select Eng. Works III 507-523.

for members of religious orders (private religions) to leave them and live according to 'the rule of Jesus Christ.' He shows that rules of orders, if consistent, with Christ's rules, are superfluous, and if inconsistent, that they are pernicious. He points out the right of the King to take temporal goods given to the church, and if curates do not do their offices properly paying of tithes should cease. He points out the evils of endowing monasteries and quotes Grosseteste. Finally he requests that his view of the Eucharist, that it is both 'very bread and also very Christ's body', be permitted to be taught openly.[1]

At the same time four followers of Wyclif,- Hereford, Aston, Bedeman and Alington went off on a preaching tour in Hampshire and Berkshire. This is the first definite information we have about Wyclif's poor preachers. Workman thinks he was sending them out as early as 1377 since they were accused of playing a part in the Peasants' Revolt of 1381.[2] But

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1. Workman II.252
2. Ibid II.201

here they appear definitely. In May 1382, Hereford was back at Oxford and preached a sermon that stirred up an insurrection between the enemies and followers of Wyclif.

To these attacks of Wyclif and his followers the church was not slow in reacting. Before Parliament had time to answer Wyclif's petition Courtenay summoned a Synod at Blackfriars to deal with this heresy. There were so many friars in the council that Wyclif in contempt called it the 'council of the friars.' Wyclif himself was not summoned, bu t twenty-four heretical and erroneous conclusions which had been extracted from his writings were presented. During the council a great earthquake took place which, but for Courtenay's coolness, might have broken up the Synod. Wyclif, in contempt, on this account, called it the 'Earthquake Council.'[1] Courtenay secured the condemnation of the twenty-four conclusions but before publishing it made sure to secure the support of the secular power. Parliament

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1. Workman II.267

were fully aware definitely. In May 1302, Pateshull was dead, so Orford and Trowbridge a person that mixed up in lawlessness between the crowdies and followers of Wyclif.

To those attacks of Wyclif and his followers the church was not slow to resume, because Parliament had taken no enough popular religious controversy, appointed a Synod of Blackfriars to deal with this matter. Thereby so many students in the council were in it as consequence called it the 'council of the Friars.' Wyclif himself was not summoned, in a twenty-four heretical and erroneous conclusions which had been extracted from his writings were condemned. During the council a great earthquake took place, but for Courtenay's opinion, it was a sign of the Synod. Wyclif's partisans on this account, called it the 'Earthquake Council.' Courtenay received the confirmation of the twenty-four conclusions but before publishing it he had time to consult the support of the secular power. Parliament

1. Workman, op.cit.

was just about to be dissolved. Courtenay "persuaded Richard to admit in the statute passed at the end of the session a chapter or ordinance dated on the day that Parliament rose, wherein with the pretended consent of Parliament, it was ordered that upon certification from the bishops the King's command should be issued by the Chancellor of the Kingdom to the Sheriffs and other State Officers of Counties for the arrest of all lollards, especially of itinerant preachers, who, we are told, 'go from county to county and from town to town, in certain habits, under pretense of great holiness, preaching daily not only in churches and churchyards, but also in markets, fairs and other open places, wherever there is a great congregation of people.'"[1] Courtenay then had this mandate published throughout the English Church and wrote to Rigg, the Chancellor of Oxford, reminding him of this statute and his duty to suppress heresy in the University. Rigg rebelled, saying neither the Archbishop nor the Bishop had power over the University in matters of heresy. Courtenay called another Synod, more

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1. Ibid II 268-269

was just as apt to be disturbed. Courtenay proceeded to object to Amelia in this strain because of the end of the season a number of ordinances drawn in the day that Parliament was, through with the protracted session of Parliament, it was argued that such a revolution upon the part of the Alnwick concerns should be issued by the Chancellor of the Duchy for the Monarch and other State officers of Counties for the exercise of all judicial, especially of lithograph procedure, as are held up from a county to county and from law to law in certain cases, where instances of Jewish Alnwick concerning Duty are cited in Jurisdiction and obedience but also in courts, relative under high fines, which are in a great conservation of people.[1] Courtenay's son was also concerned Qualified Statement the Majesty's Queen and work to sign, the Chancellors Tribunal, remaining min of their subjects and to duty, to suppress Irvedy in the University. The Association, crying neither the Aphrodite, but the minority was ruling over the Judicatory in matters of honors. Courtenay quite another Grand, some

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1. Plan II Pp-229

impressive than the last, to which he invited Rigg. Rigg was humiliated and bent to the archbishop's command. He returned to the University and published the c ndemnation of the XXIV Conclusions and the mandates against lollards. Wyclif, Hereford, Repingdon, and Aston were asked to leave. Repingdon went to Courtenay and recanted. Hereford and Aston were excommunicated and the first escaped from the country while the second set off on a preaching tour in the west soon to return and recant. Wyclif retired to Lutterworth and was left unharmed.

This is one of the most remarkable facts in Wyclif's life,- that his followers, some of them cultured men, like Hereford and Repingdon, were hunted down on every side, expelled from Oxford and forced to abjure when Wyclif was left to spend his days peacefully at Lutterworth. Courtenay stopped with branding his teaching as heresy and condemning his books. No attempt was made to excommunicate Wyclif and "all official records are silent regarding his further life, nor do they

even notice hisdeath."[1] The remarkable escape of Wyclif's escape has been explained by Wood and Knighton by attributing a cowardly recantation to Wyclif. Workman's examination of the evidence, however, shows this recantation clearly to be unhistorical.[2] Nor is there any evidence that the "reluctance of Courtenay"[3] to prosecute Wyclif was due to any love or respect for the personal character of Wyclif. Workman's explanation fits the facts perfectly and gives us a very interesting insight into the situation. "We believe," says Workman, "that Courtenay thought it better to be satisfied with the advantages he had obtained rather than risk a contest with Wyclif or the powers behind him, of the issue of which he could not be certain. For the duke had returned no answer to the friar's petition. Rumors, it is true, were afloat of his breach with Wyclif on the matter of transubstantiation, but they were rumors merely. Lancaster, though careful not to give any weapon to his opponents by his countenance of heresy,

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1. Workman I.294
2. Ibid II.295-296
3. Ibid II. 294

contrary is plausible." The remark also accords of Wolff's feelings has been established by Yoko and religion, by attributing a community recognition to Wolff. Norman's examination of the evidence, however, makes this reconstruction clearly to be unsatisfactory. Not by them are realities that the "existence of Gunsaway" is presumed. What I was due to any love or respect for the personal character of Wolff. Norman's orientation with his facts for sorry and gives of a very interesting insight into the situation. The evidence, says Norman, that Gunsaway thought it better to be straight with the alternative be had "called" rather than. Even a contract with Wolff or the Gunsaway family, or the fear of Allah he could not be certain. For the time was nothing in number of the Jerman's position. Indeed, it is true, we do notice of him before, with a half of the matter of "Gunsaway" and, if, were amount Wolff. Immediate, though general not to give any reason to suppose to by the existence of Jerman.

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1. Norman I.234
2. Ibid. II.295-296
3. Ibid II.294

was keenly watching how matters were proceeding. So skillful an opportunist was not likely to throw Wyclif to the wolves, at any rate until he saw he could make no further use of him. In the temper of the Parliament and of the country it was possible that a turn of the wheel might bring the lay perty once more into power. We incline then to see in the actions of 1382 a system of give and take on the part of this consummate wire puller. We believe that in a bargain with Courtenay,-- not the less binding because in no sense formal,-- the duke consented that Courtenay should drive Wyclif from Oxford, and persecute his followers, but would not allow him to proceed to extreme against his old associate. We are confirmed in this belief by finding that in June 1384 Wyclif claims that John of Gaunt was protecting his Poor Priests, and that in consequence the duke had been a victim of a plot by the friars. With this compromise Courtenay was forced to be content. The archbishop was too wise to risk his gains by a possible repetition of the scene in St. Pauls."[1]

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1. Workman's II. 296-297

Wyclif had retired to Lutterworth early in the summer of 1382. In the fall of the same year it is thought that the first Wyclif version of the Bible was published.[1] The work was possibly begun in 1380.[2] Hereford had begun it and had translated the Old Testament through Baruch III 20. After his flight from England the work was taken up by Purvey and probably finished[3] about this time. This translation was "a verbal rendering without clearness or expression or idiomatic use of language. Wyclif himself, whose English style is always vigorous and free, must have been dissatisfied with it; at any rate he never quotes from it. Shortly after its publication, possibly even in Wyclif's lifetime, the work of revision was begun by Purvey, who in Wyclif's last days acted as his secretary at Lutterworth.[4]

Wyclif needed a secretary in the last two years at Lutterworth for in November of 1382 he had a minor stroke which left his body partially

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1. Ibid II.162
2. Ibid II. 148
3. Workman II.162, note 2
4. Ibid II.162

paralyzed.[1] It was at this time, too, or possibly shortly before, that Wyclif published his Trialogus.[2] It is a brief summafy of Wyclif's views on most subjects on which he had written. This work is less vehement and dogmatic than most of his works but is unshaken in conviction. This restraint was not long lived, however, for in December 1382 Spencer opened his crusade to help pope Urban VI against the Schismatics led by antipope Clement at Avignon. Every inducement the pope could contrive was offered for crusaders. The worst were indulgences for both the living and the dead according to the contribution in money and service to the crusade. "Wyclif was roused to a new fury by Spencer's crusade, the persecution of his Poor Priests by the friars, and in the outrages of Urban VI."[3] In his Cruciata written in the spring of 1383 he vehemently declared that the crusade was an expedition for worldly mastery and pronounced the indulgence 'an abomination of desolation in a holy place.'[4]

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1. Ibid II.316
2. Ibid II. 309
3. Ibid II. 310
4. Schaff V Part II p.322

The remainder of the year 1383 and the beginning of 1384 Wyclif used to write many English and Latin works including sermons, his Opus Evangelicum and de Citationibus Frivolis. The first volume of Opus Evangelicum is in the main a commentary on the Sermon on the Mount. The second volume is concerning Antichrist, but deals with hypocrites and blind guides from the pope downward, and emphasizes the sufficiency of God's law.[1] The de Citationibus Frivolis is a tract attacking the pope's power of citation. He contests the legality of papal citations showing that they are derived neither from God nor from temporal powers.[2] This papal power is nothing but the power of Satan and Antichrist he concludes. This tract was probably written because of rumors that the friars were petitioning Urban VI to cite Wyclif to Rome.

As evidence that the friendly relation between John of Gaunt and Wyclif down to the last year of Wyclif's life we have the record that in

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1. Workman II.313
2. Ibid II.314

May, 1384 when the duke was accused by a friar of plotting against the King, Wyclif took notice of the fact and in one of the many tracts attacking the friars he "turned the matter into a plot of the friars as a body to accomplish the death of the duke 'because he was unwilling to punish faithful priests.' i.e., the Poor Priests, instead of attributing it to its real authors De Vere and Thomas Mowbray, assisted by the passion and prejudice of Richard.....Wyclif's reference is of interest as showing his continuedtrust in John of Gaunt."[1]

To climax his attack upon the friars, after August 17, 1384 Wyclif wrote a treatise, entitled de Quattuor Sectis Novellis. In it he includes every grievance against monasticism and refers to members of the 'sects' as sons of Cain.

During these last days at Lutterworth Wyclif was very busy writing and instructing his Poor Priests. He was dauntless in courage and full of hope. He had many followers in spite of

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1. Workman II.306

persecution and these he sent out with a new evangelical zeal to turn England upside down. The essential message of these Poor Priests was to point out that God's Law or the Bible was the true guide to Christian living and that anything contrary to or unprovided for in the Bible was unnecessary in religion. This busy life of Wyclif was soon cut off however by a second stroke in December 1384 from which he died.

We should like to dwell here upon the later influence of Wyclif and the lollards and say a word of appreciation concerning his life, but since it is our intention to give special attention to that in the last section of the paper, we shall refrain here, and turn now to the main interest of the paper, namely, the ideas of Wyclif for the refprm of the Roman Catholic Church.

PART TWO

JOHN WYCLIF'S IDEAS FOR THE REFORM OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH.

A. State and Church: Nature of each and relation.

So much space has been given to the background of Wyclif's ideas in his life and times because it is our feeling that only in that setting can their genesis, development, and historical value be understood. From the discussion so far we have a general picture in mind of the forces, conditions and the personal equation out of which Wyclif's ideas arose and we have some idea of the order of their development. Now let us turn to the ideas themselves. The first thing we must take account of in dealing with his ideas is that they are very diffuse and unorganized and only by a general knowledge of all of Wyclif's writings can one tell how much any idea gripped him. Consequently it must be remembered that in so far as we systematize Wyclif's ideas here for study we are not accurately representing him. Our main interest, though, is to examine his ideas and not his method.

The relation of State and Church was the first great subject of Wyclif's ideas for reform. His

writings containing these ideas were precipitated by the struggle of England with the papacy over the question of tributes, as we have seen in the preceding pages. Thus it would seem that patriotism was the immediate cause of his reforming spirit. The problem was, in essence, whether the pope or the king should be supreme in England. To answer the question Wyclif wrote a series of treatises. The first was his Determinatio which he enlarged into two works, the de Civilio Dominio and the de Dominio Divino. Four years later, in 1378, he published two more works, the de Officio Regis and the de Ecclesia, on the same subject. The first three works were meant to be merely idealistic like Plato's Republic or More's Utopia.[1] No plea is made for actual reconstruction, but "the most casual reader will recognize that the book is full of dynamite, however careful Wyclif may be to emphasize its purely speculative basis."[2]

The de Dominio Divino Wyclif begins by distinguishing 'lordship' (dominion) from 'use.'

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1. Workman I.259
2. Ibid I. 262

"Following the view maintained by the Spiritual Franciscans, especially by Marsiglio and Ockham,[1] Wyclif distinguished 'lordship' both from 'right' and 'power' and from 'use.'"[2] The 'lordship' of God he points out to differ from that of kings in that God asserts immediate lordship over all while the king exercises lordship over his subjects through vassals. Following out this feudal idea " the 'lordship' of God never separates ownership from possession."[3] Thus since all hold their possessions in subject to God they owe the dues and service of stewards and bailiffs to their lord in chief, God. " 'Men should beware that all goods that they have be goods of their God, and they be the naked servants of God.'"[4] From this he proceeds to the idea that "dominion is dependent upon grace, and that mortal sin is a breach of tenure and so 'incurs forfeiture'".[5] The last part of his book discusses the relation of grace and merit, and which is the basis of possession. "The merit is of grace,

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1. Ibid I.260 Note 1, Civ. Dom. III 324f and Poole's note Dom. Div. 5
2. Ibid I.260
3. Ibid I.260
4. Ibid I.260 quoting Dom. Div. 33,250, 255. cf. Civ. Dom. II, 105; Eng. Wks. 284; Sel. Eng. Wks.I.55)
5. Ibid I Note 3, Dom. Div.213. Cf. Sel. Eng. Wks.III.88

and the reward is of grace; but none the less man would deserve nothing unless by the power of his own volition." But inquiring further, "into the relative shares taken by God and man in causing man's merit, it is shown that the operation of God's grace is the principal cause, and that while no one can have merit of works, he can have merit through works of God's grace."[1]

The de Civilio Dominio opens with the two ideas that " no man in mortal sin can hold dominium or lordship; theother that every one in a state of grace has real lordship over the whole universe."[2] The sinner, therefore, forfeits his lordship, while, since the righteous are lords of all things a universal reciprocity of service according to the Christian principle supercedes the relation of lord and servant. This involves the "Socratic" doctrine of holding goods in common, but Wyclif is careful to exclude the community of wives.[3] "The present arrangement of society he regards as the result of sin, as well as contrary to the law of nature; it

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1. Ibid I quoting Poole Dom. Div. pp.xxxiii - iv.
2. Workman I.261 Note 3, Civ. Dom. I cc.1-14
3. Ibid I.261 Note 5 Civ. Dom. I c.14

ought to be exchanged for the law of the New Testament which is sufficient without the assistance of the Canon Law for all purposes of human life and government."[1] The next important idea he advances is that Kingship stands in no human right of election or heredity but in grace.[2] In the next section Wyclif applies his principles to the relation of Church and State. (This was the section especially condemned by Gregory XI in 1377).[3] He first questions the right of grants in perpetuity because the title must rest on the approval of God and could not be held irrespective of personal merit.[4] Consequently, if an ecclesiastic abuse his property the secular power should deprive him of it, and give the people partial relief from taxation.[5] Since such an act would evoke excommunication from the church Wyclif points out that only excommunication for spiritual offenses is effective.[6] He disputes the power given Peter and protests against the use of excommunication to force payment of tithes. Tithes should only be

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1. Ibid I.262 Note I Civ. Dom. I c.18, II.154 and note 2, Ibid. I
2. Ibid I.262 Civ. Dom. Icc. 26-31
3. Ibid I.263
4. Ibid I.263 Civ. Dom. I cc. 35-36
5. Ibid I.263 see notes 2 and 3.
6. Ibid I.263 Civ. Dom. I.307

paid to clergy to aid the poor, but if a cleric be wicked, laymen should pay alms directly to the poor.[1] He concludes the first book with two appendices in the first of which he defines the church as "the whole body of the predestinate, past, present, and future, whose head and eternal director is Christ."[2] While in the second he holds that both pope andcardinals may err and that neither is absolutely necessary for the government of the church. In fact a worldly pope should be deprived as an heresiarch.[3] In the second book Wyclif gives some historical illustrations of exappropriation of church property, commends the deposition of popes by Otto the Great and others, and approves the fate of Boniface VIII. But of more interest is an unusual passage giving excellent insight into his thinking. "Oh! how happy and fertile," cries Wyclif, "would England be if every parish church had as of yore a saintly rector residing with his family, if every manor had a just lord residing with his wife and children! Then there would

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1. Workman I.263
2. Ibid I.263 Div. Dom. I 358f
3. Ibid I.263 Civ. Dom. I c.43,414; II.414; IV.398,404

be not so much arable land lying fallow and so great a dearth of cattle. Therealm would have an abundance of every sort of wealth, as well as serfs and artisans. But now there are but hirelings who fret at the civil rule of clergy, naturally abhorring it; who are lazy, indifferent to the tillage of the ground since it is not theirs; who take to theft because of lack of oversight by a resident squire; who are unbridled in character and with unrestrained license squander the wealth of the realm. The clergy on their part, rival lords in their sumptuous habits, and secular lords work to outshine clergy in their style of living and dress, and so the realm suffers manifold pains, the chief cause of which, unless I am mistaken, is the clergy. For if they would teach efficiently in word and deed the law of Christ, as in old times, abuses of this sort would cease. If, too, the civil tenants owned the wealth there would be an increase in marriages and children -- the elements, according to Aristotle, of a republic's growth -- and the realm would grown fruitful in wealth."[1] The remaining books

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1. Workman I.264-265 Civ. Dom. II.14

of the work are for the most part superfluous but in the third book begins "with an attack upon the orders, though not with the vitriol that in later days became constant with him."[1] He claims that the friars differ from the monks ' in wishing more strictly to follow Christ in his poverty,' and that here the Franciscans show the highest perfection.[2] From the complete poverty of Jesus and the apostles he deduces that the clergy may not have civil rule or hold property except to help the poor. Civil lordship interferes with spiritual ministry; therefore, he is on the opinion that the pope "should restore the clergy to their primitive freedom by throwing off the burden that Sylvester laid upon him by accepting the Donation of Constantine."[3]

As we have said, these two books discussed were suppossed to be merely theoretical treatises at the time, but they were not taken as such. The Church took them as dangerous heresy. The trial in St. Paul's and Gregory XI's series of bulls based on

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1. Workman I.265
2. Ibid I.265 Civ. Dom. III 4f, 13,57,350.
3. Ibid I.265, Civ. Dom. III 251, 253, 333.

eighteen conclusions from Wyclif's writings were the result. Wyclif, however, was undaunted and so far from retracting anything further elaborated his ideas in two more works, the de Ecclesia and De Officio Regis. The de Ecclesia is a discussion of the true nature of the Church. "When people speak of the church they mean thereby prelates and priests, endowed monks, canons and begging friars, and all who wear the tonsure, however disreputable and contrary to the word of God they may be. On the other hand they say that people in the world are not men of the holy church, though they live ever so faithfully according to God's law, and die in perfect love of their neighbor. But not withstanding this, all those who will one day be blessed in heaven are members of the holy church, and no one else besides."[1] The church, according to Wyclif, is made up of the sum total of those who from eternity are predestined to salvation. This includes the 'one triumphant in heaven,' 'one militant on earth,' and the third 'asleep in purgatory'. The elect -- 'universitas predestinatorm' -- include

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1. Arnold, Sel. Eng. Wks. III.447

'only men who shall be saved', and who cannot cease to be such even by mortal sin, for theirs is the grace of final perseverance.[1] The 'foreknown' are those eternally damned. There is only one church - the universal church of Christ and to be in the Catholic church is not necessarily to be of Christ's church. He even goes so far as to say that no man knows, not even bishop or pope, whether he is of the church any more than he know the day of his death. Christ is really the only head of the church needed. The pope is the head of the church militant not by virtue of human election but by thegrace of God, and then only if he obeys Christ's law. In the commands of Christ we owe thepope obedience and in nothing more. "Upon every command of the pope, we must enquire whether that which he orders is in harmony with the Bible; and this is one reason why every Christian should be acquainted with the Holy Scriptures (et hec est ratio quare oportet omnem catholicum cognocere scripturam sacram)"[2] " 'The life and teaching of Christ are the best glass', by

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1. Workman II. 8 Eccles. 74, 111, 140; Blas. 86; Op. Min. 99, 114; Trial 152; Eng. Wks.198; Serm. IV.148.
2. Loserth, de Ecclesia , p.5

looking into which we can discern the true belief and the heretic."[1]

Following logically upon the idea that the foreknowledge of God is eternal Wyclif holds that the church is eternal and existed even before Christ's incarnation. He uses this as an argument against the papacy since before the incarnation there was no papacy. Further, he pointsout the fallacy of the doctrine of all being guilty of the sin of Adam since 'Christ won more wealth for man than Adam ever lost.'[2]

Wyclif's doctrine of predestination leads him to the idea that salvation is not dependent upon connection with the visible church nor upon the mediation of the priesthood. In fact his belief that the faithful have free and immediate access to God in Christ involves the universal priesthood of the predestinate.[3] He does not discuss how he should deal with or value the sacraments in such a situation. He avoids the problem. But in later

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1. Workman II. 12 De Eccles. 34, 38-39, 41,88. cf. Eng. Wks. 485, and Pot. Pap. infra, p.75f
2. Ibid II.12. Eccles. 30,106,119; Ver. Script.III.206
3. Loserth, de Eccles. p.vi.

years "he held that every predestined man is a priest, and that 'every priest divinely ordained can confer all the sacraments of the church as well as a pope.'"[1]

The main emphasis of Wyclif's teaching is upon worth of character as the test of spiritual function. "The priest must prove his qualification for his office by his good character and by his good works. All unworthy priests should be deposed , and prelates should be honored according to their deeds. "The value of the sacrament was made to depend on the spiritual attitude of the priest. 'That priest that lives better sings the better mass.'"[2] To harmonize this theory of spiritual values founded on worth, with his theory of dominion founded on grace, Wyclif pointed out that while an unworthy person may hold office by divine grace and appointment in the apparent church, still he may be unworthy and not be a member of thereal spiritual church."[3]

By finding the test of the predestinate or

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1. Workman II.13 Trialogues, 280-281
2. Workman II.13 Sel. Eng. Wks. III.425
3. Workman II.14 Eccles. 71-72, 365; Eng. Wks. 422

the worthy in their living in conformity with the teaching of God as revealed especially in Christ, Wyclif sweeps away most of the Catholic system as then practised. Endowments, enforcement of tithes, right of sanctuary shrines, absolution, indulgences, cult of the saints, relics, images, pilgrimages, trentals, masses and prayers for the dead he denounced as deceptions of the devil. He is not so violent or complete in his denunciation of abuses in his de Ecclesia as he is in some of his later works; but since this is his first attack upon them, for the sake of unity we shall deal with the whole attack upon abuses in the church, here.

Wyclif began his attack by examining the claims of the privilege of sanctuary for Westminster Abbey. He finds no such privilege to be granted in the Bible. 'Moreover, it is no honor to the church to protect a criminal, and it is better not to burden an abbey with worldly care. The King's law, furthermore, is above private privilege. "Those privileges with which Christ has endowed the church are spiritual blessings. Other

privileges such as immunities, prerogatives, outward honors, property and worldly dominion, ruin the church -- they are snares of Satan. People who seek privileges of this kind do not belong to the church."[1] The highest privilege granted by Christ was to follow Him in His poverty, a primary not in goods or honor but in labor. Consequently the desire of the clergy to enforce tithes is proof of unworthiness. Laymen commit sin, likewise, in endowing the church with worldly goods and the clergy commit sins in accpeting endowments.[2] Endowments are not sanctioned in the Divine Law and they are inconsistent with the state of innocence of the early church before pope Sylvester accepted the donation of Constantine. The evils of rich endowments, he points out, are shown in the vicious practice of simony,[3] the papal schism and the national wars which have resulted from them. Those err, he says, who think their merit is according to the amount they give to the church. "A cup of cold water offered sincerely and with good will, is perhaps a gift of higher value than lands and kingdoms."[4] Therefore the church should

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1. Loserth, de Ecclesia, p.x
2. Ibid, p.x
3. See special work on this, De Simonia written soon after.
4. Loserth, p.xii

be restored to its primitive privilege of poverty and only enough alms should be given theclergy to ennable them to discharge their spiritual functions. Christ did not suffer on the cross to gain endowments and 'Caesar's privilege' (the bishop's or abbot(s right of gallows by which he could have a condemned person put to death) for the clergy.[1] Disendowment of the church would "deliver the church of the unfit men who take up clerical offices for the loaves and fishes; at the same time it would sweep away the distinction between the seculars and regulars."[2] Church treasure might lawfully be used to better davantage for the defense of the realm, the redemption of captives, the avoidance of excessive taxation and the maintenance of good lay ministers.[3]

In his insistence that wealth is a danger to the church and that poverty is a virtue Wyclif goes to an interesting extreme in one of his later sermons. It gives an insight into the extreme secerity and spirituality of Wyclif's conception of

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1. Workman II.14
2. Workman II.15 Eccles. 203,308; Sermon II.269; III, 21
3. Ibid II.15 note 3.

religion, and it sounds a warning worth noticing, not only for his day, but for all time, on the danger of wealth for Christianity. Speaking of beautiful and well endowed churches he says: "And it appears that Christ condemned such buildings both by deed and word. They were neither virtuous in themselves, nor do they incite to virtue. If they do it must be because their beauty augmants devotion, but what reason is there to believe this? Did not the martyrs pray more devoutedly in the dungeon? Did not John the Baptist reach loftier heights of devotion in the desert? Did not Christ, as well as the father of the Old and New Testament (Jerome) pray in the open air? For when Christ passed the night in prating, he was not shut up in a temple, nor did the patriarchs needs a temple for their devotions, as they were well aware that God was omnipresent; and in churches man's mind is diverted very much by earthly things. The building of churches often leads to the contrary of what was intended, it swallows the property of the church and produes manifold errors on account of the many human inventions and innovations connected with it.

Why, I ask, should the church care for the forms of friars' churches, why for the form of their cloister, why for the appearance of refectories and sleeping rooms with many other things, which have been smuggled in after the manner of Pharisees, since we know, that not these outward signs, but the pure mind of the man who meditates on Christ's sufferings, and the soul raised to God in humble reverence, make the place a holy one? What have we to do with the four walls of a cloister, set up to keep our monks from worldly affairs, and to confine them in silence and lofty observances wherein they pretend their religions consists, When we know they are lynx-eyed to know what goes on outsides the walls of their abode, and pay little attention to holy things. Therefore the abbots are weary of staying in the walls of their cloisters, nobody is more worldly minded, more eager in acquiring money, or more dissolute in his life, then they. There is no doubt that the cloister has ripened these fruits."[1]

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1. Loserth, Sermones, Vol. II p.xix.

According to Wyclif God's Law not only did not sanction endowment of the Church but there was also no provision in it giving the priest the power of absolution or for papal indulgences. "Absolution must depend wholly upon worthiness in God's sight.... apart from this even the pope has no right to grant absolution, for every sin has its assigned punishment which none can remit. The whole system of indulgences, therefore, rests upon the false basis of an inexhaustible store of superogatory merit at the disposal of the pope.[1] Even God himself, who alone can grant indulgences, cannot remit sin without satisfaction. Moreover, if the pope possessed such power he should use it freely to restore the golden age, or he would be guilty of the death of those whom he might have saved.[2] Wyclif's attack on the shameful system of absolution by indulgences was scarcely more vitriolic, however, that that of the orthodox Dr. Gascoigne. The main difference was that Wyclif did not merely decry the abuse but went back to the first principle in which it was rooted.[3]

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1. Workman II.15, Eccles. 551; Pol. Pap. 208
2. Ibid Ii.15, Eccles. 561, 571-2, 583, 585-6; Sel. Eng. Wks. III.355
3. Matthew p.xviii,xix and Workman II.16

The cult of saints, apart from that of the Virgin Mary, likewise he attacked, for 'some may be enrolled in the catalogue of the saints who are most justly rejected of God.' We may be sure of the apostles and martyrs, he says, but this is not so 'of modern saints who are canonized for family reasons, for gain or reward, or for favour of parties.' 'Current miracles' are no proof of saint-hood either, for these may be the result of diabolical delusion. "The curia in its canonizations 'is as ignorant of real holiness as Prester John or Sultan."[1] The doctrine that the saints have stored up grace for men which is entrusted to the pope for distribution is the source of many errors.[2] There are many saints more holy than those canonized who could help us in our prayers if we loved Jesus Christ more. It ought to be noticed, too, that the truest saints, like St. Bernard, always hesitated to even call themselves members of the church. Then when the cult of the saints is disestablished, the evils of relic worship and of shrines emblazoned with jewels and gold, will also end. "Such'wealth foolishly lavished on shrines

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1. Workman II.17 note i, Eccles. 44-5,6,7,465. Pot. Pap. 329, 337 same II. 1,etc.
2. Loserth, de Eccles. p.vii also for most of paragraph.

might be distributed to the poor to the honor of the saints."[1]

Wyclif's condemnation of relics and pilgrimages is restrained in the de Ecclesia. Earlier he had owned that images were laymen's books,[2] but in his later writings he is unsparing in his condemnation. "It seemed a 'great blindness' to spend so 'much about a rotten stock, and suffer a poor man, very image of the Holy Trinity, made of God Himself, for to lie in such mischief.'"[3] Wyclif, conscious of the danger of veneration of relics in worship, warned against 'sensuous preparations which have nothing religious about them.'[4] Pilgrimages Wyclif condemned as being 'blind' for ' Christ is in every place in the world' to take away sin.[5] And besides encouraging 'lechery' through promiscuous association of men and women, they ennabled the rich to obtain pardon, but had nothing for the bedridden poor.[6] Wyclif's scorn for the 'pardoner with stolen

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1. Workman II.17;Sermones II.164-5; Eng. Wks. 210,279.
2. Ibid II.17; Serm. II.125
3. Ibid II.17; Sel. Eng. Wks. III.462-3; (A later lollard's but representative of Wyclif.)
4. Ibid II.17; de Mand. f 134.
5. Ibid II.18; Eng. Wks. 7,343.
6. Ibid II.18; Sel. Eng. Wks. I.82-83

bulls and false relics' was one with that of Chaucer and Piers Plowman.[1]

Wyclif did not apply his doctrine to the idea of purgatory in his de Ecclesia but in later years "he held that without doubt the soul after its separation from the body must be cleansed from many desires, and cannot attain at once to full blessedness. He maintained the medieval doctrines of the harrowing of hell to this extent that 'no man entered into bliss before Christ.'[2] Beyond this he was unwilling to go. He refused to search for the place, duration, or manner of purgation. But of one thing he was convinced: indulgences, trentals, masses, and the whole systemof prayers for the dead were deceptions of the devil, invented by the father of lies to deceive believers."[3] Wyclif does not shrink from affirming the eternity of punishment. "Like many later theologians he argues from the eternity of salvation to the eternity of damnation, and is emphatic that not a single word of scripture

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1. Ibid II.18, note 6
2. Workman I.19; Ver. Script. III.135
3. Ibid II.18-19

justifies the theory of universal salvation."[1]

Shortly after the de Ecclesia, which we have just examined, Wyclif published a comp anion work, de Officio Regis in which he deals definitely with the relation of State and Church. The basis of this book is that the dignity of the King is derived directly from God and is therefore not only independent of the Church but supreme in all temporal matters.[2] As proof he shows that Christ was born under, and recognized the authority of the Roman emperor, he permitted the adoration of the Magi, and willed his burial by the military order as represented by Joseph of Arimethea. For the superiority of the King he further quotes Augustine and Ambrosiaster in the statement that 'the king has the image of God as the bishop has that of Christ.'[3] Thus the King is explained to represent the ruling Christ and the priest the suffering, submissive Christ, or in other words the King represents the will of God and the priest, his love. The king represents the temporal power

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Ibid II.19; Ver. Script. III.215-230
2.Pollard and Sayle, De Officio Regis, pp. I-II
3. Officio Regis, pp. 10-12

and justice of God, while the pope is entrusted with the spiritual power and love of God. "Both powers are from God, but the kingly was the first in time -- Adam, says Augustine, was the first king and Cain the first priest,-- nor does the priestly consecration of Kings confer any superior authority. Even bad kings, though not possessing real lordship, must be honoured as being appointed by God, just as forward priests are honoured for the sake of their office, and also we know the image of God even in the damned. But if bad kings do wrong to the cause of God they must be resisted unto death, though Wyclif qualifies the argument by emphasizing that Christ and His martyrs glorified the church by their patience."[1] In the second chapter he points out the evils of giving clergy secular offices and says that to permit this and forbid clerical marriage is to strain out the gnat and swallow the camel.[2] The third chapter of Wyclif's de Officio Regis deals in detail with the duties of a King. His duty as a man is to be wise and well acquainted with the Divine Law. He must keep around him good counsellors and he must see to

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1. Workman II.21
2. Ibid II.22; Off. Reg. 29, cf. Eccles. 365

it that his clergy by their contempt of the world and their love of truth are a model for all. The king's task is to maintain a good government which consists in a few good laws strictly enforced. As God's vicar the king is bound to govern the clergy according to God's law and punish severely any degenerate members. The king is, therefore, bound to deprive the church of its temporal lordship, all endowments, etc. which have been unscripturally acquired and the clergy must be required to live by tithes and alms. With the wealth taken from the church the king could afford to hire good ministers 'suitable for lay service.'[1] To meet the objection that things consecrated cannot be taken back, Wyclif says that " it is no breach of vow to correct abuse."[2] In the fifth chapter again Wyclif insists on the supremacy of the king over the clergy and in the sixth he points out that even a pauper ought to be obeyed, if he be the better man, rather than the worst pope or kaiser. Some freedom is necessary to true obedience; Wyclif points out that the obedience

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1. Workman II.22 Off. Reg. 52
2. Ibid II.22 ; Off. Reg. c.3; and cf. Ibid 206f, and Eccles. 322.

of seculars is of a higher order than that of the regulars. Since obedience to the Law of Christ is the only requirement of the Church, papal bulls are not to be obeyed unless they are founded on scripture. The last chapter of the de Officio Regis again emphasizes the king's jurisdiction in even more daring fashion than in any preceding chapter. "He maintains that since the sin of the individual weakens the Kingdom the king may inquire into all sins. Episcopal jurisdiction, in fact, is derived from the king, and the king's power to correct the secular clergy, in the first instance acting through his clerical ministers, must be fully acknowledged, as indeed is shown by Urban VI calling in the secular arm to crush the anti-pope.[1]

Throughout the de Officio Regis there are digressions. A few are of interest. He suggests that alien clergy in England be forced to take an oath of loyalty in order that the number of traitors may be reduced. Another place attacks the doctrine that monacticism is more perfect than the simple

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1. Ibid II.23; Officio Regis 119f.

religioj of Christ. Among these digressions are three practical demands of great interest.

Quoting Workman:[1]

"(1) that bishops, on whose choice the king would bestow infinite diligence, should be obliged on pain of confiscation of their revenues, by yearly visitations to investigate the state of the clergy in their diocese and to see that their number was more in harmony with the number of their laymen. For this purpose use should be made of provincial church councils.[2]

(2) that the king through his bishops should enforce residence in all parishes of learned, zealous curates. Thus the country will be rid of foreign absentees whom the pope now imposes upon the church in virtue of his blasphemous intention to be lord in chief of all benefices, 'who can transfer them to horses, dogs, women, and even harlots.' Where the curates fail to do their durt the parishioners must withhold all pay.[3]

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1. Workman II.24
2. Officio Regis 152f; 158,244; cf. Eccles. 372
3. Ibid 77,163f, 227, 231f, 237, 245.

(3) for the extension, defense, and reform of all the theological faculty."

By reform of the theological faculty Wyclif means to forbid clergy, the study of physics, natural law, civil law, or Canon Law, The stury of Christ's Law and the Common Law of England Wyclif deems sufficient.

Concerning excommunication Wyclif takes the firm stand in the de Officio Regis that no one is hurt by excommunication unless he is excommunicated by his own sin or ' by the Bishop of the Church Triumphant." All excommunication ought to be based on lovw, and should include the right of appeal to the crown. The final decision should be made by joint session of the parliament and synod and should include appropriate punishment. One of the duties of the Stae Wyclif considered to be the removal of heretics acting according to the advice of skilled theologians deciding according to God's law.[1]

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1. Workman II.27; Officio Regis; Eccles. 341

In another digression Wyclif maintains the lawfulness of oaths, a point in which his disciples did not follow him. Though, in Workman's opinion,[1] he would probably approve Purvey's protest against the common swearing ' by God's heart, bones, nails, sides and other members.' At another point, Wyclif protests against most wars as the result of cupidity and ambition. Wars for conquest, and 'wars of priests' are always wrong. The only wars Wyclif approves are those for 'God's justice' in the 'cause of the church or for the honour of Christ."[2]

The general drift of this treatise Wyclif summarizes in three principles: "(1) that the clergy and especially the pope, must be more humble and ready to serve; (2) that they must be removed from secular affairs and fall back upon apostolic example; and (3) that for this purpose the Church must be relieved of its excessive endowments, and so restored to its primitive condition."[3]

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1. Ibid II.27
2. Workman II. 28
3. Workman II. 28; Officion Regis. 182, 210-11,275-6, 280-1

The real effect of the treatise, however, in spite of the safeguard that 'the king is more bound to his subjects than they to him," is to exalt the king to a position of Divine Right. But in spite of his assertion of obedience being duty to tyrants, Wyclif with a felling for the rights or subjects paradoxically corrects himself by maintaining that sometimes the truest obedience to a tyrant lies in resistance. "Wyclif was trying the impossible: to think out a theory of Church and State which would leave the King supreme and yet guard the rights of the people."[1]

B. The Authority of the Bible.

Wyclif had written his works on Divine and Civil Dominion on the assumption of the final authority of the Bible, but before he followed these works with the de Ecclesia and the de Officion Regis he evidently felt the need of making clear his belief in the truth and final authority of the Holy Scripture for early in the year 1378 he published

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1. Ibid II.30

his de Veritate Sacrae Scripturae.[1]

Even in his scholastic days Wyclif had laid down the supremacy in human thought of the scriptures.[2] Workman says Wyclif's lectures on the Bible even as a 'cursor' were no empty form.[3] In all of his writing and thinking, in fact, Wyclif had assumed the primacy of Scriptural authority. We have seen the importance of authority for the schoolman in the first section of this discussion. We have also seen that Wyclif in assuming the final authority of the Bible followed in the footsteps of Augustine, Grosseteste, and Ockham.[4] But Workman points out that there is a fundamental difference between Wyclif and his predecessors. They had always thought of "Scripture, creeds and dogmas as in harmony or combination; whereas Wyclif advanced to the position so characteristic of the later Reformation of distinguishing between the Bible and the teachings of the church and its doctors, Wyclif's insistence on the supreme authority of the scripture was not

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1. Ibid II.4, see also Buddenseig.
2. Ibid I.135 De Comp. Hom. p.3
3. Ibid I.136
4. Workman II. 149 In Ver. Script. I.217 Wyclif claims also the support of Fitzralph.

less than that of Luther, and won for him at an early date the proud title of 'doctor evangelicus', while he desired that the title 'viri evangelici', 'men of gospel', be given his adherents. Those who mingled God's truth with human traditions he dubbed 'mixtim theologi', 'medley divines.' God's word, pure and simple, ' alone must be taught and alone determine the articles of faith. Only Antichrist's clerks will ask the question, 'How provest thou that it is holy writ more than any other book'?"[1]

Evidently it was this scepticism of the authority of the Bible that precipitated Wyclif's de Veritate Scripturae. It is probably based, according to Workman,[2] on lectures given during his period of reading for his doctorate in theology, and is a "rambling but uncompromising defence of the absolute inspiration and authority of the Bible...." Dr. Buddensieg thinks "there is not a single book in the whole range of medieval literature which can be placed side by side with this apology."[3] Workman thinks this an exaggeration but says that "certainly

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1. Ibid II.149-150
2. Ibid II.4
3. Buddensieg, Ver. Script. I.xxiii

in none of his works does Wyclif come closer to the standpoint of the later reformers."[1]

Wyclif's exaltation of Biblical authority was a clear departure from current practice. This may be seen from his complaint that 'nowadays the man who defends the truth of the Scripture suffers contumlies and persecutions,[2] and from his many references to "the current scorn of the Bible, of which he complains..."[3] Moreover, according to Buddensieg, "It is a known fact that in Wyclif's time the scholastic theologians which declared the Church to be the authority for all dogma and the guardian of sacramental practice, made the Bible the corpus vile of their petty fogging subtleties and the aim of their scoff and scorn. While formerly the defenders of the most correct clerical positivism there is no end of their attacks on its truth and authority."[4]

In the face of this it was a real innovation for Wyclif to make his claims of Scriptural supremacy, and there is no doubt about his firm

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1. Workman II.5
2. Ibid II.5; Ver. Script. III.99, 172
3. Workman II150 ; Ver. Script. I.55,148,183,245,296,383; II.43; III.107.
4. Buddensieg, Ver. Script. p.xxi.

belief in its absolute and final authority as the Word of God. Even his works as a schoolman are full of scriptural quotations. "In the Trialogus alone there are 700, and in his de Civili Dominio the number is greater.[1] They are not illustrations, but appeals to a supreme authority, for the Bible is ' a Charter written by God,', 'the marrow of all laws,' and ' contains all truth.' Upon it all human knowledge is founded; 'Science of God feedeth men well, other science is meet for hogs, and maketh men fat here but not after doomsday.' Only so far as they are founded on 'God's Law,' are the conclusions of philosophers true." In one word of Scripture Wyclif holds, there is more sound doctrine than in all papal bulls and decretals, and in the following memorable sentence he makes his position classic as 'Doctor Evangelicus,' "Ideo si essent centum papae, et omnes fratres essent versi in cardinales, non deberent credi dententiae suae in materia fidei, nisi de quanto se fundaveriht in scriptura."[2] i.e., If there were a hundred popes, and all friars were turned into cardinals, their

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1. See the astonishing list in Civ. Dom. IV.663f

opinions in matters of faith ought not to be accepted except in so far as they are founded on scripture.

Wyclif's doctrine of Biblical interpretation is as novel as his assertion of its supreme authority, not so much in the mode of interpretation as in the right of every individual to interpret for himself. He gives his assent to the fourfold exegesis of the medieval church in the literal, allegorical, tropological and anagogical senses,[1] but "he maintains that the literal or grammatical sense is the best 'dulcissimus, sapientissimus, et preciossimus.'"[2] However, in his own sermons he does not fully practice his own theory. He was too much influenced by Augustine to abandon allegorization.[3] But Wyclif evidently did not see the problems involved in Biblical interpretation for he held that there was no need of " an intermediate concensus of interpretations expressed in traditions of an historic church."[4] Rather since each man holds lordship directly from God, according to Wyclif he is directly responsible

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1. Ibid II.151, note 3; Ver. Script. I. 49; Sel. Eng. Wks. II.277
2. Ibid II.152
3. Ibid II.152
4. Ibid II.153

to God and is therefore necessary for him to know God's will and Law for himself. Furthermore, God's Law is simple enough for even the humblest to understand. Wyclif says, "'The New Testament is full of authority, and open to the understanding of simple men, as to the points that be most needful for salvation....He that keepeth meekness and charity hath the true understanding and perfection of all Holy Writ , for 'Christ did not write his laws on tables, or on skins of animals, but in the hearts of men,'....'The Holy Ghost teaches us the meaning of Scripture as Christ openeth its sense to His Apostles.' For priests and bishops the knowledge of the Bible is necessary that they may carry out their pastoral office, and 'for all Christians, if they are to be saved,' for 'to be ignorant of the Scriptures is to be ignorant of Christ.'"[1] Every priest ought to pass an examination on the Bible and 'no man was so rude a scholar but that he might learn the words of the Gospel according to his simplicity.'

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1. Workman II.151

According to Wyclif, the individual in interpreting Scripture needs essentially only three things: a thorough knowledge of Scripture, a pious frame of mind, and divine illumination.[1] He aemitted no possibility of falsehood being in the Bible. "Falsitas non est in scripturae, sed in false intelligente,"[2] he repeats frequently. Like Augustine he says that "misconception and want of grammatical and logical knowledge of the interpreter introduce falsehood into scripture."[3] He emphasizes the literal sense in the phrase "sensus literalis scripture est utrobique verus,"[4] again and again. As a sort of check on literal interpretation he insists that the deeper meaning of scripture is spiritual and can only be grasped by the instruction of the Holy Ghost. For the layman's understanding of scripture he gives a bit of instruction of interest here. To understand scripture the layman needs, according to Wyclif, and ardent and sincere desire for salvation, assiduous study, prayer for right and understanding, a humble and penitent heart, faith

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1. Buddensieg, Ver. Script. p.xxvi.
2. Ibid, Ver. Script. I.193 and frequently
3. Ibid p.xxvi
4. Ibid p.xxxiv

in the foundation of all knowledge, comparison of texts, thorough acquaintance with the train of thought, and an inward readiness to receive the truth and teaching through Christ.[1] This instruction seems to make interpretation difficult rather than simple, but it clearly shows the faith of Wyclif that the individual is capable of and has the right to interpret Scripture for himself.

Wyclif's appeal to the absolute and single authority of the Scriptures was an innovation but his idea of giving the laity the Bible in their own language to read and interpret for themselves, was a revolution. Miss Deanesley in her Lollard Bible according to Workman,[2] has "investigated with impartial learning" the question as to whether the Bible was read to any extent by the clergy or laity before or during Wyclif's time. She concludes that " between the Conquest and Wyclif's day the average priest could not read Latin freely; sometimes, evem he could not translate it at all."[3]

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1. Buddensieg, Ver. Script. I.xxxiv
2. Workman II.153, see note 2
3. Ibid II.154 quoting Deanesly 161,195,204; Piers Plowman c.VI 36-37.

The clergy below the parish priest knew little beyond what was necessary for the daily routine. And as for the laity, it "is almost impossible to quote any instance of lay people who were acquainted with the Bible before Wyclif's day.'"[1] Thus Workman says, "All the evidence shows that Wyclif's plea for the reading of the Bible by the laity was a revolution, not an extension of existing practice."

Wyclif's faith that the laity ought to read the Bible for themselves logically would lead to the translation of the Bible. The only versions of the Bible then existing were the Vulgate, the Anglo-Saxon, and the translation in Alfric, all of which were unintelligible to most people.[2] Consequently, to meet the new demand, two translations of the Bible into English were made during Wyclif's day. There has been disagreement among scholars as to whether Wyclif translated any part of these. But the evidence now in hand, given by Workman,[3] seems conclusive enough that "the work was not actually done by Wyclif, though no doubt in this, as in all

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1. Ibid II.154-55, quoting Deanesly cc 6,7,8.
2. Workman II.155
3. Ibid II.170-200

else he was the moving spirit of the band."[1] The 'plan' seems to have been 'devised' by Wyclif[2] but the actual work of translating was done by his followers, especially Hereford and Purvey. For our purpose it is not necessary to go through all the evidence. That would be a thesis in itself. Our primary interest here is that the idea was Wyclif's. "Wyclif's works are full of passages advocating such a translation,"[3] and there is no doubt that the translations were a result of Wyclif's influence on his followers. It is to be regretted that Wyclif did not do the translating himself, since Wyclif's translation of the scriptural passages quoted in his English Sermons are much better than the translations of either Hereford or Purvey.[4] However, translation was not Wyclif's primary aim. It was only part of his great demand for reform, something that could well be left to his disciples.

But " whatever be the decision of research as to Wyclif's contribution to the first English Bible, no one can deny his constant appeal to the

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1. Ibid II.161
2. Ibid II.187
3. Workman II.186, see citations in note 2
4. Ibid II.176

also he was the moving spirit of the book.[1] The 'plan' seems to have been 'devised' by Wyatt but the actual work of translation was done by his friends, especially Surrey and Grover. The suggestion is not too hard to go through all the evidence. That would be a thesis in itself. Our primary interest here is that the line was Wyatt's. Wyatt's works are full of phrases mentioning such a translation,[2] and into up to date with the translations-work. Lately of Wyatt's translations on his relations. It can be acknowledged that Wyatt did not do the verse translation alone. Grover's version of the Ventidius Dialogue in his English version was much better than the translation one of his friends or Surrey. However, translation is not Wyatt's outstanding gift. It was only part of his preparation for writing something that would well be left to his friends.

But a master in the art of translation is Wyatt's estimation of the Italian poets, as we can say his interest stands as the

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1. Ezra II.143
2. Ezra II.107
3. Ezra II.144, was attributed to John S
4. Ezra II.146

Scriptures as the primary and absolute authority." Wyclif's thinking begins and ends in the Bible and it was out of a genuine and sincere faith in its truth that he attacked the many existing evils in the church. The most characteristic thing about Wyclif is that his whole spirit is steeped in Scripture, especially as it reveals the spirit of Christ. It was probably more on this account than on the account of his English independence or the friendliness of the king that Wyclif had the daring to withstand the whole hierarchy, and certainly on no other basis can the indomitable character of his followers in bearing persecution be explained. In Wyclif's day the authority of the pope was thought to be absolute, supreme, and final, but as we have seen Wyclif did not hesutate to declare that the Bible is God's Law and that even the pope must obey it.

C. The Papacy

The institution of the papacy was so

important in Wyclif's day that his attack upon it deserves special consideration. This was the third great step in his revolt. Wyclif's attack did not begin in earnest until after the Schism. During the papacies of Urban V (1362-70)and Gregory XI (1370-78) who themselves were good men, Wyclif did not severely attack the papacy. In fact it was not until after the conference of Bruges that he attacked at all. From that time until after the Schism he disputed the pope's temporal power but not his spiritual primacy. His position in this period seems to have been: "We must obey the pope as Vicar of Christ, only the Vicar of Christ must be the poorest, the holiest, the most God-enlightened man in Christendom, who more than all others obeys God's Law ....Unless he has'Peter's life' the pope with his keys becomes merely a 'porter of hell gates.'[1] In this we see Wyclif's characteristic concern for the individual; there is no recognition of the medieval concept of the papacy as an authoritative institution. "As, we see in his De Dominio, obedience to the papacy was

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1. Workman II.73, see nte 1.

rather a matter of order and convenience of the Church than of principle."[1]

Wyclif's first real break with the papacy came after the conference of Bruges and Gregory' XI's excommunication of the Florentines which led to Wyclif's closer examination of the power of the papacy in his books on Divine and Civil Dominion. In these treatises he passed opinions on the pope's temporal power which, as we have seen, led Gregory to publish a series of bulls against Wyclif. This drove Wyclif into "fierce denunciation"[2] and in his next treatise, the de Ecclesia, he did not hesitate to call Gregory a 'horrible Fiend.'[3] But he still held to the value of the papacy, though insisting that popes and prelates must be obeyed only so far as they follow Christ, and act according to Scripture. "'No pope is to be believed unless he is teaching by the inspiration of God, or founding his utterances on scripture.'"[4] During the first part of the Schism Wyclif favored Urban VI for his

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1. Ibid II.73
2. Ibid,II.74
3. Ibid II.79, Eccles. 358; Sermon III.59
4. Ibid II.74; Apos. 65,69,173; Serm. II.157,177; IV.66

seeming virtues, and even called him 'our pope,'[1] But as the Schism advanced and Urban proved to be a Wolf in sheep's clothing almost as bad as Clement, Wyclif became more and more opposed to the pope and to the institution itself. "Wyclif had already questioned whether one day 'the ship of Peter may not exist exclusively of laymen,' and whether when that day comes, ' Christ will not per se sufficient for the rule of his own spouse,'[2] He was driven to the conclusion that just as the 'virtue of the king is stretched over all his realm,' so every Christian has Christ to help him, and 'needs neither pope nor bishop for his salvation.' The temporal power in all its forms he looked on as simony.[3] Finally, Urban's excesses, the struggle of pope and antopope , and Spencer's crusade worked Wyclif into a fierceness of wrath and indignation which blazed out in violent attacks upon the papacy and the whole theory underlying it.

Wyclif's intermediate views on the papacy are discussed in the <u>de Potestate Papae</u> and

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1. Ibid II.75. Pot. Pap. 247
2. Workman II.74; Civ. Dom. I.392; Pol. Wks. I.257
3. Ibid II.74, note 5

summarized in the de Ordine Christano both of which were published in the spring of 1379. In this work he applies his theory of the Church, outlined in the de Ecclesia, to the pope. It was written while Urban VI still seemed to be a virtuous pope and Wyclif praises him for his assistance and insistance on evangelical poverty for the cardinals. He calls him 'our pope', established by national recognition,[1] and hope he will justify his election. "But throughout the work we detect a growing undercurrent of doubt. In one place he urges that, since we cannot tell from their acts which of the two is the true pope, both should hold their peace until the Church should decide.... meanwhile ' we English cannot accept either,' for their rivalry marks them both as antichrists.[2] In fact the whole tendency of the work, though not its object, is to show that the church does not need the papacy; it would be better if it were governed by a council for an endowed pope is antichrist."[3-4]

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1. Ibid I.75 Note 2
2. Ibid II.75 Pot. Pap. 149,186,212.
3. Ibid II.74; Pot. Pap. III.321
4. Ibid II.75

The de Potestate Pape begins with an introduction concerning the relation of temporal and spiritual power. Of the spiritual power one kind is the clergy's to dispense sacraments and the other is shared by all alike. So temporal power is also shared by the rulers and by the community at large. Spiritual poweris superior but it gives no temporal rights. Both civil and temporal power are from God direct. Of all power righteousness is the sign, consequently those who fall into sin lose their power.[1]

In the next section Wyclif considers the powers of priests, bishops and popes. Following Jerome and Fitzralph he sees no essential difference between them. Then he examines the first of all bishops (the pope) according to the twenty reasons for the primacy of Peter given by Fitzralph. Wyclif admits that the successors of Peter have primacy in the church, since Christ cannot abandon his church, but he insists that no pope is Peter's successor unless he possesses the qualities of Peter. Wyclif returns

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1. Workman II.75-76 -- for paragraph.

to his ideas of grace and worth of character. Just as Peter was chosen Christ's vicar because of his love and humility, and because of his resemblance to Christ in love and doctrine, so must it be with Peter's successors.[1] To find out whether the election is God's will the best mode would be by the drawing of lots.[2] "The system of election by cardinals, a sect unknown to scripture, most of whom are not even priests, is a scandal. But, however elected, the successors of St. Peter have no juridical rights over the Church militant, for Peter himself had no rights over the other apostles,[3] and the extension of papal jurisdiction over Christendom is of pagan origin. The primacy of the pope is a primacy in character, the living like Christ without possessions and free from all worldly interests, the fulfillment of the thirty-four points which Bernard enumerated as the qualities of a true pope.[4] Wyclif then turns to the argument that pope, bishops and abbots require temporal power in order to support their spiritual position.[5] If the pope would embrace

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1. Ibid II.76,note 3; Pot. Pap. 97,101,160; Ver, Script. III.73,etc.
2. Ibid II.76,note 4; Pot. Pap.68f; Sel. Eng. Wks. I.395; II.413
3. Pot. Pap. 98f,113,157,195-6; cf.Op.Min. 130, Sel. Eng. Wks. III.354
4. Pot. Pap.94,101,135f; Sel. Eng. Wks. II.434
5. Pot. Pap. 162f,222

the poverty of Christ and renounce interference in all temporal matters, then God would bestow on him more perfect gifts and the power of working miracles.[1] But Wyclif strikes the pacy the worst blow in holding that no one can tell whether the pope is a predestined member of the Church. We can only believe in his predestination through his deeds of holiness and the conformity of his acts with scripture. He makes sanctity the sign of authority.[2] The true papacy, furthermore, consists in service,[3] and a pope who departs from the way of the apostles is antichrist.[4] Christ's true vicar is the one who imitates His poverty and gives His life for his flock.

After disputing the right of the Romans to elect the pope Wyclif explodes the theory of the Holy Roman Empire and claims England's freedom from its jurisdiction. He points out that merely because so many martyrs dies in Rome, the place does not sanctify the pope. To prove this he closes the book with a list of twelve abuses of which the papacy

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1. Workman II.76-77
2. Ibid II.77, Pot. Pap.360; Blas. 44
3. Ibid II.77; Pot. Pap.365
4. Ibid II.77; Pot. Pap. 118 f,186f,327.

and its 'satraps' have been persistently guilty.

This earlier attitude of Wyclif toward the papacy was full of contradictions for even though he formulated every possible objection to the papacy's necessity in the Church, still he accepted it for convenience sake. But as the Schism progressed Wyclif was driven into violent opposition against the whole system. "His spiritual earnestness was shocked, his theory destroyed, by the spectacle of two popes, possessing all the notes of the 'wolf', each claiming to be the sole head of the Church, each labelling the other as an antichrist, 'like dogs quarrelling for a bone,' 'like crows resting on their carrion,' each seeking to bring about a general Armageddon for the destruction of his rival, each confiscating for his own purposes benefices held by the adherents of the other,[1] each offering indulgences for 'many thousand years after doomsday, so that a man may get in half a day a hundred thousand year and more.' To call such a man 'Most Holy Father' is but 'gabbing.' 'Men that know the

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1. Pol. Wks. I.350-351; II.591; Op. Evang. I.433

worldly state say that popes, cardinals, bishops and religions be most far from Christ's life."[1-2] Again and again in the later English and Latin works of Wyclif and his followers scorn is poured on the idea that, because Peter died at Rome, the Roman bishop is to be set above all Christendom. By the same reasoning the Muslims might conclude that 'their prelate at Jerusalem', where Christ died, is greater than the pope. "Christ alone is the head of the Church, the primacy of Peter not proven, the infallibility of his successors a heresy .....their canonizations no proof that a saint is in heaven, their claims to 'assail and curse' without warrant, their grants of priviliges .... and their dispensing of the Church's treasury of grace, more especially in indulgences for waging unnatural conflicts, 'the lewdest heresy.'[3] He acknowledges, it is true, even in his latest pamphlets, that Rome fulfils certain necessary functions of government, but he arraigns her methods as not by the love and patience of Jesus but by

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1. Sel. Eng. Wks. II.28,30,36,229,302.
2. Workman II.79
3. Pol. Wks. II.559,594,667-8; Serm. IV.184; Sel. Eng. Wks. II.281,415,111,244,256,345.

haughtiness, pride and ambition.... From this conclusion it was an easy step to the proclamation that the Church would do better to go back to the sole headship of Christ, and give up the gentile right of choosing a pope.[1] "But Wyclif does not stop by merely stating that the papacy is unnecessary, but goes so far as to say that the Church would enjoy greater peace without pope and cardinals. The pope is not a 'God on earth,' -- 'a mixed God,' as Wyclif sneers, but 'the leader of the army of the devil,' a 'limb of Lucifer,' 'the head vicar of the fiend,' ' a simple idiot who might be a damned devil in hell,' 'a detestable fugitive,' 'an apostate from the rule of Christ,' 'a more horrible idol than a painted log,' to whom it were 'detestable and blasphemous idolatry' to pay veneration."[2]

More than once in his treaties Wyclif makes a list of twelve contrasts between Christ and the pope to show that the pope is antichrist.[3] In his later treatises he even welcomes the schism as a revelation from Christ that the papacy is antichrist.

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1. Workman II.80; Pol. Wks. II.56-561; Apos. 202
2. Ibid II.80-81; Serm. II.66,158,201f; IV.190; Pol.Wks. II.396,559,564,608,619-621,671-6;691.
3. Ibid II.81, see note 4.

Spencer's Crusade he finds to be proof of the same point. The Schism proved that the papacy was not the shepherd but the betrayer of the Church. Therefore advocates that soldiers, instead of crusading for one pope against the other, crusade against them both. "The pope had rejected Christ, so Christendom, especially the secular lords, must reject the pope, and by an alliance of the English and Germans restore the Church to its primitive poverty."[1]

D. The Eucharist and the Sacraments.

Wyclif's attack upon the Catholic dogma of transubstantiation was the outcome of his philosophical realism. He approached the subject from the standpoint of metaphysics, not of abuses. His doubts on this subject led him to publish two treatises, the de Apostasia and the de Eucharistia about in the autumn of 1379. He was driven to his denial of transubstantiation by his nominalist opponents who insisted that he explain the sacrament according to his philosophical realism. Wyclif's realism required that 'subjects' and its 'accidents' or 'reality'

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1. Workman II.82; Pol. Wks. II.509,592-3,596,608. Serm. I.132

and its 'appearances' cannot be separated. Consequently Wyclif could not submit to the idea that the consecration of the bread caused its annihilation but left behind the appearance of bread which was the Body of Christ. Wyclif's nominalist opponents who held that 'accidents' were possible without 'subject' saw no difficulty in this annihilation of the bread leaving only the accidents conatining only the Body of Christ without change of appearance. In his early student days Wyclif had accepted this on faith[1] but "soon after he began his study in theology he abandoned a position that contradicted his philosophical tenets.[2] For a while he held that thebread was not annihilated, but changed into a 'mathematical body, which is nothing but the mathematical points of which the bread consists.'[3] But after his Oxford condemnation he tells us that God moved him to maintain that the bread itself is the body of Christ since Christ is the essence of every material substance. "To this position, that there can be no accidents or aggregate

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1. Workman II.33, notes 1,2,3.
2. Workman II.33, note 4
3. Ibid II.34

of accidents without subject, Wyclif in his later years was henceforth consistent."[1]

But "Wyclif was too serious to rest content in dialectic refinements, nor is it possible out of his writings to deduce a consistent system. Wyclif, in fact, like all men in earnest, became less anxious for his theory as he became more insistent upon spiritual facts."[2] Even in his earlier treatises he emphasized that the Eucharist is only valid if it helps to the spiritual acceptance of Christ. He warns against mistaking the sign for the thing signified. "He would, in fact, subordinate everything to moral values, and for definition fall back upon the unexplained phrases of Scripture and the language of the Fathers 'in the first 1000 years of the Church when Satan was bound',[3] before the dogma of Innocent III had introduced 'heresy' into the Church, and led 'the sects of yesterday' to prevail over 'the pious uses ' of Catholic antiquity."[4] Several places Wyclif says he has no doubt of the reality of transustantiation but that it must involve no destruction of substance."[5]

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1. Ibid II.34-35
2. Ibid II.35
3. Ibid II.35, note 5
4. Ibid II.35; Eccles. 458-9; Euch. 169,177,286; Apos. 49,50,55,110,113.
5. Ibid II.35-36, note 1; Euch. 47,219; Apos. 170; Ziz. 105

Matthew says, "The truth is that Wyclif would like to avoid saying how Christ's body is present....If his opponents would let him say it, he would say that Christ was present sacramentally, as he does sometimes."[1] Wyclif accepted the simple scriptural statement, "This is my body," and was "certain by faith that the bread is in reality the body of Christ," and that every separate wafer holds the whole humanity of Christ."[2]

But Wyclif's nominalist opponents would not allow him to rest here. They demanded a full explanation and "In the course of his argument Wyclif was driven from position to position, until finally he put forth a theory permeated with Platonic realiam, practically identical with that taken at a later date by Luther. In other words, Wyclif fell back upon a belief in Consubstantiation. 'That Christ lies hidden in the elements,'[3] that we can 'see' Him there 'by faith' and receive Him in the host as the sun's fire is received through a sphere of crystal,

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1. Workman II.36,note 3; Apos. p.xxxvi cf. Serm. II.459
2. Ibid II.36; Euch. 46,82,116,347.
3. Euch. 15,29.

that Christ is in every part of the host, as when you break a glass in every part 'thou mayest see thy face, and thy face not parted,'[1] or 'as a man may light many candles at one candle, never the more nor never the less,'[2] -- he regarded beyond question."[3] In another passage he says,"The truth and faith of the Church is that as Christ is at once God and man, so the Sacrament is at once the Body of Christ and bread,-- bread and wine naturally, the body and blood sacramentally."[4] And in another place he explains further that "The body of Christ is in the sacrament of the altar not by any way of multiplication but virtually only, as a King is in every part of his Kingdom."[5]

Wyclif's arguments are full of inconsistencies[6] and hair-splitting distinctions especially when combatting the prevailing materialistic interpretation of the Eucharist. He pronounces it sacrilege that the priest should have such power over God as to be able by his consecration of the

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1. Serm. II.458; IV.351-2; Euch. 206; Apos. 109
2. Wycket,13.
3. Workman II.37
4. Ibid II.38; Apos. 103,106,116,119.
5. Workman II.38; Euch.109;Apos.210; Sel. Eng. Wks. II.274; III.404
6. Ibid II.38

bread to change it into the actual body of Christ. If such is the case he puzzles about 'magots bred in the host', about the 'vacua,' what would happen if the host were eaten by a mouse, and " whether the real body of Christ in the host is standing or sitting."[1] But "nevertheless, the drift of his thinking is clear. 'His chief intention,' he said, 'was to call back the Church from idolatry,'-- the great danger of all worship of the elements,[2] -- for 'the end of the Sacrament is the presence of Christ in the soul.'"[3] Thus he quotes approvingly the words of John Damascenus, "We must believe that the bread becomesthe body of Christ, since the Truth has said it, not inquiring farther."[4]

Concerning the administration of the sacrament Wyclif, in his earliest days, insisted on the sacramental function of the priest,[5] but in his latest opinions maintains that the Eucharist might be consecrated by a layman.[6] For a while he held that 'the foreknown, even when in actual sin, can

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1. Ibid II.40
2. Ibid I.40; Euch. 53,63,111, 317; Blas. 20; ziz.107
3. Ibid II.40
4. Ibid I.40-41; Apos. 52.
5. Ibid II.41; Euch.99; Eccles.457-8.
6. Ibid II.41; Trial 280.

administer the sacraments with profit to the unfaithful,' Christ supplying all the defects of the priest; but in later years he maintained that the value depended upon the priest having a good character,[1] 'being consecrated of God.'[2] As another corollary of his theory of the Sacrament he held that not a fasting communion, but ' a fast from sin,' was necessary, and that it was not necessary for the communicant to take the sacraments at certain set seasons, but he should be at liberty to choose the time he preferred. But to receive the Eucharist the communicant must be worthy in God's sight, predestinate, in a state of actual grace and habitual virtue, and must have faith, hope and love and follow Christ's way of life.[3]

Confession was closely linked with the Eucharist in the medieval church since it was necessary to confess before taking the sacrament of the altat. This was the source of much evil. At first Wyclif admitted the obligation of conscience to confess as often as necessary, provided one could

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1. Workman II.41; Euch. 113; Eccle. 448,456-7.
2. Ibid.41; Sel. Eng. Wks. III.426; Euch. 114
3. Loserth. Euch. p.xxiii

find a 'predestined' priest, not living in sin, for one might as well confess to the devil as to an 'idolatrous, leprous, simonical heretic,' who thought only of the money gain.[1] In Wyclif's later judgment, while penitence was necessary, verbal confession was optional at the discretion of the penitent. Let the Christian guard his freedom, let him confess if it profit him; though general public confession, as a rule, is better than private, as private confession often leads to unchastity. But every man must judge for himself when he will confess, as he judges when he will hear a sermon or to take food. The penances and absolutions that follow confessions are too often a matter of sale; a 'one-eyed man' can see how wrong such conduct is, let alone neither a pope nor priest can tell how gravely a man has sinned, and therefore cannot assign due penance. If a priest impose unreasonable to get money, let the faithful leave him, and after due contrition take the sacrament; if excommunication follow, let him rejoice and communicate spiritually; for our Great High Priest will always give us absolution if we are penitent.[2]

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1. Blas. 133-34; 144.
2. Blas. 121,136,145,148,151,159; Trial 328; Eng. Wks. 330

The scandal must be stopped of rich men confessing to 'Caesar prelates,' or to their own private confessors --who are as foten as not fiends of hell,- laughing as they do because they intend, as soon as 'absolved by a small sum of money from all their sins,' to repeat the same sin, while the poor cannot get absolution.[1] The distinction between venial and mortal sins is without warrant in the Scriptures.[2] That absolution -- the reservation of which Wyclif denounces as a 'new trick of the Roman curia' -- is only valid in so far as it is the representatio n of Christ's previous absolution is with Wyclif a cardinal principle; 'preists may assoil of sin if they accord with the keys of Christ.'[3] 'Not by the priests laying his hands on thine head' but ' by sorrow of heart' cometh God's assoil, and, therefore, the formal absolution might well be given by a layman.[4-5]

As to Confirmation Wyclif writes, "I do not see that in general this sacrament is necessary for salvation, nore especially reserved to the bishops."[6]

1.Op. Min. 318
2.Sel. Eng. Wks. III.452; Blas. 169
3. Ibid I.18,35,48,136; III.261
4. Ibid III.252; Eng. Wks. 333
5. Workman II.42
6. Ibid II.43, quoting Trial 294.

Wyclif's view of the sacrament of marriage is also of interest. The Tract, Of Wedded Men and Wives[1] is a sensible and charming discussion of the subject. He scathingly rebukes young men who marry old women 'for love or worldly muck', and 'courageous men who will not take a poor gentlewoman to his wife, but live in the devil's service all their life, and defoul many temples of God to the perils of their soul,' and end by marrying a 'rich woman for muck. Work is the remedy against all lechery, for 'idleness is the devil's panter to tempt man to sin.' Earlier in his life Wyclif had leaned to a rigid doctrine of self-denial holding that virginity was better than marriage.[2] But in this and other later works he allowed that 'priests are wiveless against God's authority', though maintaining that such marriage may be consistent with virginity.[3] His discussion on children again reveals his spiritual but practical approach. Some parents, he sais, 'make sorrow if their children are naked or poor,' but care not if they be naked in soul.'[4]

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1. Sel. Eng. Wks. III.188-201
2. Workman II.45; Dom. Div. I.167
3. Ibid II.45; Sel. Eng. Wks. I.364; III.190; Op.Evang. I.169; In Ver. Script. II.263 he only hinted at marriage of priests as a possibility.
4. Ibid II.45; Sel. Eng. Wks. III.196,198.

E. Monasticism.

Wyclif's doctrine of the Eucharist brought upon him a controversy with the friars of Oxford which led to his condemnation by the Council of 12 at Oxford in 1380 and by the Blackfriar's Synod of 1382, both of which were made up mostly of friars. This condemnation on the part of the "Pope's liegemen",[1] as Wyclif called the friars, caused Wyclif to completely to reject monasticism and to launch an attack against it that increased in bitterness to the very end of his life. He wrote a whole volume of sermons against it,[2] and a large share of his Polemical Works,[3] the most bitter of which is de Diablo et Membris eius[4] which is a violent attack upon the evils of monasticism. Wyclif's last writing before his death in 1384 was a polemic entitles de Quattuor Sectis Novellis. It is evidence that Wyclif's most vicious and persistent opponents were thefriars and that in his opposition to them he regarded them as more pernicious even than the pope.

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1. Workman II.30
2. Loserth, Sermones, Vol. II
3. Buddensieg, Polemic Wks.
4. Polemic Wks. I.357-74.

2. Translation.

Spoil's doctrine of the Immediate Struggle upon his a controversy with the Talmud or Oral Law led to his condemnation by the Council of Is at Cathedral in 1560 and by the Algerian's Synod of 1580, both of which were made up mostly of Talmud. This condemnation on the part of the "Sages's Allegory", as Spoil's called the Talmud, caused Spoil to emphatically to reject mysticism and be based on an Written Law; it that increased his distaste to the very end of his life. He wrote a whole volume of Talmud against it, and a large share of his Polemical Works, the most notable of which is Ca Bilada ea Bunkie also which is a violent attack upon the evils of mysticism. Spoil's last written before his death in 1606 was a classic entitled Ca Qualtner Mrilla Tomaitha. In it he argues that Spoil's most valuable contributions are Qualtner and that in the original or in them by scholarly Jews, as Bible translations from Jews the Spoil.

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1. Sources 11.36
2. Israel's Sorrows Vol. 23
3. Jewish Encyclopedia
4. Israel's Sorrows 1.Ed-Ra.

In Oxford, as a student, we would see that Wyclif would be acquainted with the triple antagonism against the monks, friars and seculars. More important, however, he would come in contact with the ideas of the Spiritual Franciscans, among whom Ockham and William of St. Amour[1] had been leading spirits. They had tried to bring about a return to the strict Rule of St. Francis, especially in regard to poverty. In their struggle they even attacked the papacy for its arrangement whereby friars could not 'own' property, but hold it for use in trusteeship to the papacy. The ideas of the Spiritual Franciscans were in the air when Wyclif was at Oxford[2] and proper credit must be given to their influence upon him, especially since it was said that Wyclif "commended much the religion of the Franciscans, and stated that they were very dear to God."[3]

Before his definite break with the friars over the question of the Eucharist, Wyclif had advocated that the vow of poverty be enforced and endowments be

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1. Workman II.99
2. Ibid II.100
3. Workman II.92; Eulog. Cont. III.345

confiscated by the state, but his main attack was upon the heirarchy of the Church. However, after his quarrel with the friars, Wyclif's attack became pretty largely centered in the evils of monasticism. He founded his attack, as usual, in Scripture, but "when we try to disentangle Wyclif's main argument against monasticism from the mass of his polemics we find that it lies in the conception of the Church as one body,-- 'the order of Christ,'-- without heirarchy and without divisions. Distinctions of a sort there must be, but such divisions should not be of spiritual status; they are, as we should now express it, divisions of convenience or function. Essentially all are one, just as presbyters and bishops originally were one. Against this unity the monks and friars were at war, by their proclamation of a religion founded upon a law superior to the law of the Gospel. Hence his nickname is that of 'Sects.' They possess a 'private religion,' as distinct from a religion laid down for all. The rules of this 'private religion' -- 'ordinances of Bennett, or Domynik or Frances' -- Wyclif rejects because they

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they are neither founded on Scripture nor contained in the Gospels. 'Lord' he exclaims, 'since Paul presumed not to found such sects why should fools and idiots take this upon them?' Moreover, so far from the life of the Cloister being the more perfect, as the regulars claimed, in reality it is inferior to that of a devout secular.[1] In place of an exalted ideal we have self interest and greed, the struggle for 'fat bishoprics' and rich benefices. Instead of the complete rule of religion as given in the Scripture we have endless additions, like the heap of rubbish round the walls of a perfect building. These take away all freedom and place upon the men heavier responsibilities than God has designed."[2] Perpetual vows Wyclif regarded as unlawful since "Christ himself cannot compel anyone to enter religion except voluntarily."[3] And if perpetual vows are unlawful so is the idea that a man can control his property forever by donation or secure perpetual succession of persons worthy to receive his gift.[4] Wyclif's conception of the unity of the Church,

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1. Workman II.93, see note 1
2. Workman II.93
3. Workman II.94
4. Ibid II.94,note 2

moreover, caused him to resent the exemption of so many monasteries from the control of the bishops, and the claim of the friars that they were a state within a state, responsible only to the pope.[1] He felt that the king should disendow the monastic orders, and install the abler monks and friars in parishes, making others into teachers and artisans.[2]

Against the monks or "possessioners" as distinguished from the friars, Wyclif's attacks were unceasing. His worst indictment of them was that "They do not abide by their three vows, and it is a singular coincidence that their vow of poverty has become ruinous to the poor of the land."[3] He claimed that "monks with their 'red and fat cheeks and bellies,' who 'do not the office of curates, neither in teaching, nor preaching, nor giving of sacraments, but set an idiot for a vicar ', are squanderers of national wealth better bestowed upon the poor. 'Instead of desert places they have chosen cities where they live 'a lustful life to feed the flesh', 'eat up what would keep many families' and boast of the thousands of

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1.Ibid II.96
2. Workman I.79; Serm. IV.20,32; Off Reg. 180; Pol.Wks. I.244-7,285; Sel. Eng. Wks. III.170; Blas.198-9.
3.Buddenseig, Pol. Wks. 233-34.

marks they will spend on going to law,.... Another 'sect' was the Austin canons, with their lies and deceits, their sinful endowments, their saints, and their myth of foundation by St. Augustine. The endowment of these men Wyclif regarded as a sin and as a national disaster. Gifts to monasteries, in fact, were attempts to bargain with God, or to thwart the preordination of God. As such Wyclif demanded the destruction of all 'chantries, abbeys, and houses of prayer,' and the restoration of the 'poor men and blind, poor men and lame, poor men and feeble,' to the State of the goods that was really theirs."[1]

It should be noted that Wyclif brings no special charge of immorality against the monks.[2] "Their crime was the selfsatisfied spirituality which he dubbed as 'the religion of fat cows,' with nothing in it that helped subdue the flesh."[3] Wyclif's claim that the whole population of England could have been maintained out of their income is an exaggeration, according to Workman,[4] but it is true that they wasted great wealth on gluttony, gay clothes, hounds,

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1. Workman II.97
2. Ibid II.95,note 3
3. Ibid II.95, note 4.
4. Workman II.94

hawks, minstrels, and other luxuries.[1] Such wealth was acquired by lands and churches given to the monasteries. Moreover, they claimed freedom from secular taxes. It was protested, therefore, that though the monasteries had 'almost all the lordship amoritized to them, yet they will not pay tax nor tribute to the king for the maintenance of the realm.'"[2]

Wyclif protested particularly against the appropriation of churches by monasteries merely for the purpose of getting money. Usually instead of a parson, a vicar was appointed to care for the church for five to ten marks a year;[3] while the large part of the money went to the monastery. Wyclif maintained that in this the regulars inflicted a lasting injury on Christ and his Church, using the church property for their own interests, and, unlike the apostles, neglecting the care of the souls. "They put in an idiot and give him a little livlihood and take all the profits to themselves."[4] This not only lowered the status of the priesthood, but it had a

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1. Ibid II.94, note 4
2. Ibid II.95, note 1
3. Workman II.95, note 6
4. Ibid II.95

to drive the parish priest in his poverty into exactions from his parishioners.[1] For marriage, 'sixpence on the book, and sometimes a penny for the clerk,' besides pay for 'a morrow mass' were claimed. Likewise fees were claimed on the death of a parishioner, and for all spiritual acts such as baptism, confirmation, trentals, masses, etc. "The effect was to make the priest 'say the mass more for the love of the penny than for the devotion or charity to Christ.' Such masses were gabbled and irreverent."[2]

Wyclif's attack upon the friars was much more bitter than his attack upon the monks. Together he considered them the "two winggsof the army of antichrist, the friars in special, whom he compared to 'ravishing wolves', being 'members of the devil.'"[3] The friars were Wyclif's most stubborn opponents at Oxford, and his most dangerous enemies in the Church. This accounts for the bitterness of the attack. But it is to be noted, that, severe as Wyclif's attack is, nowhere does he descend to mere abuse.[4] "He does not charge them as a body with any immorality;

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1. Ibid II.96
2. Ibid II.96, note 2.
3. Ibid II.104
4. Buddensieg, Pol. Works I.xx

'bodily chastity' he owns is 'often broken, but oftener chastity of souls.' But Purvey did not hesitate to impute the grossest sins, of which going to dances 'to get the stinking love of damysels and steer them to worldly vanity and sins' was almost the least."[1] Of all the orders Wyclif felt that the friars were the most difficult to lead back to the simplicity of Christ. "In bitter jest he calls them 'the order of Caim (Cain),--an acrostic from Carmelites, Austins, Jacobites or Dominicans, and Minorites or Franciscans. As such their friars were 'Caymes Castles', havitations of thieves: 'that catiff, cursed Caym first their order founded.'"[2]

In general thegreat sin of the friars was also that of breaking the vow of poverty. One evidence of this was the costly churches of the friars. Wyclif repudiated these as 'monstrous', holding that they conduced to worldliness rather than holiness and swallowed the wealth of the Church. There is a touch of humor to his objection to their elaborate worship, holding "that singing hindered men from

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1. Workman II.104,note 2
2.Workman II.103,note 3.

attending to God's law and gave them headaches,"[1] and that "Solomon was probably wrong in giving such splendour to worship."[2] So far from practicing their vow of poverty, Wyclif accused them of using their supposed poverty to gain sympathy and more property. He censures them for preaching pompous funeral sermons for the rich in order to gain money.[3] "He condemned the puerility which led certain friars to count money with a stick and refuse to touch a coin without a glove.[4] In another sermon he puts 'the begging of Christ' among the flase lores brought in by the friars, and states that Christ had '200 pence in the hands of Iscariot.' According to Wyclif the friars begged in french either 'because they were ashamed to beg in English or to show for the most part they were Robertines,' i.e., adherents of the anti-pope.[5] Wyclif's estimates of the number of friars and of the sums obtained by begging, however, are exaggerated. He states their number at 4,000 in one sermon, and 20,000 in another, estimating that they cost five pounds each for personal support and

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1. Ibid II.102, note 1
2. Ibid II.102, note 1-2
3. Loserth, Sermones I.pxvii
4. Workman II.102, note 3.
5. Ibid II.102

five pounds for the upkeep of the churches, or 40,000 pounds a year obtained by continual begging, a sum which would 'suffice for the redemption of a captive king.'[1] But it is true that friars as a rule were far from poor and Wyclif insisted that "Their pretended poverty and affected begging are diabolical lies, devised for the hypocritical spoliation of the poor."[2]

Under this charge of "hypocrisy" Wyclif included most of the faults of the friars.[3] "If worldly domimion savours of sin even in a layman, since it is apt to be attended by pride, envy, avarice,etc., how much more in the clergy, who have taken the vow of poverty?"[4] Wyclif points out that in almost every way they not only neglect the monastic ideal, but even more so the ideal of Christ. "Scorning their primitive poverty, friars 'beg for a community whose members have ships on the sea and a store of jewels and money.' Though 'Christ had not where to rest his head, feigned beggars' intercept

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1. Workman II.103,notel
2. Ibid II.104
3. Ibid II.104
4. Loserth II.xviii

in alms 60,000 marks a year which belong to the suffering. So they own palaces with great kitchens and gate-houses and guest chambers fit for an 'earl or a duke or a king.'....'Though it rain on the altar of the parish-church' they build splendid churches with belfries that soar like the tower of Babel, often, as Wyclif pointed out, with insufficient foundations."[1] Wyclif claims that there is not a village in England but that gives more to the friars than to its lord or to its parish-priest. The friars, moreover, have an insatiable appetite for the goods of the dead and look sharp after gold and silver.[2] "Manual labor they shun like poison,"[3] and they eagerly accept fat bishoprics, but not poor priesthoods. The proverb was common that 'this is a friar and therefore a liar,' and they were nicknamed 'creepers into houses,'[4] And Wyclif grimly jests that a wise burgher will not let friars enter his cellars 'lest in blessing the wine they turn it into mere accidents.'[5]

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1. Workman II.105,note 4
2. Ibid II.105,note 8
3. Ibid II.105, note 9
4. Ibid II. 105, note 1
5. Workman II.105; Sermones III.194

In the use of their right of hearing confession and of granting absolution the friars were especially corrupt. "Sins that a man would not confess with a light heart to his parish priest he would readily acknowledge to a strolling friar whose face he would see no more. Men fled to the friar, as Langland complains, like debtors to Westminster, for as Chaucer puts it, 'pleasant was his absolution.' Said Wyclif: 'any cursed swearer, extortioner, or adulterer will not be shriven by his own curate but go to a flattering friar that will assoil him falsely for a little moeny by the year, though he be not in will to make restitution or leave his cursed sin."[1] These "Rome-runners who bear the king's gold out of our land and bring again dead lead"[2] were willing to absolve anyone from any crime though ever so foul, "for less than a pair of shoon."[3]

The friars were responsible for two other short-cuts to salvation, letters of fraternity and burial in a friar's robe, which drew forth Wyclif's

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1. Ibid II.106-107
2. Ibid II. 327
3. Ibid II.107

scorn. Letters of fraternity entitled the person to whom they were sold "to have part of all the friar's good deeds both in life and in death."[1] Buying such letters seemed to Wyclif more foolish than buying "'a cat in a sack,' for the friars would have difficulty enough in saving themselves from being 'destroyed and damned in hell.' 'A thousand of these letters will not save a man, but if he keep God's word; they are only 'good for to cover mustard pots.'[2] In spite of this outcry the traffic continued. As to the custom of burying people in friar's clothes Wyclif said, "They put more holiness in their rotten robes than ever did Christ or his apostles in their clothes."[3] Clement V had remitted one quarter of the sins of those thus buried and in consequence there were many who kept a friar's robe handy, thinking at death to pass disguised into Paradise. "Burial in the ground of the friaries became exceedingly popular, especially with wealthy citizens,[4] in spite of the opposition of parish church and cathedral.[5] Against all this spoil of men's bodies

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1. Ibid II.107
2. Ibid II. 107
3. Ibid II. 108
4. Workman II. 108, note 2
5. Ibid II.108, note 3

chiefly restricted to the rich, Wyclif protested. 'Dying even in Christ's clothes would not have saved Pilate from Damnation."[1]

F. The Poor Preachers.

As much as Wyclif condemned the friars, it was from them that he copied the idea of using itinerant preachers to spread his teaching. How early he was sending out these Poor Preachers is a matter of question, The earliest sure reference is that they were accused of playing a part in the Peasant Revolt of 1381.[2] From that time there are many clear references to "his order of 'poor priests' or 'itinerant preachers,' who in the highways and byways and by the village greens and graveyards, sometimes even in churches, should denounce abuses, proclaim the true doctrine of the Eucharist, and teach, the right thinking from which, as he deemed, right living would follow."[3] Schaff summarizes the purpose of the order as being to give England the pure

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1. Ibid II.108, note 4.
2. Workman II. 201, note 1. cf. Schaff V. pt. ii.319
3. Workman II. 201, notes 2 and 3.

gospel from the Scripture and to combat the opposition from the friars.[1] The foundation of this order, along with his movement to translate and give the Bible to the people in their own tongue, mark Wyclif not as a mere negative critic, but aws a reformer who had a positive teaching to offer.

The Poor Preachers of Wyclif were bound together by a new spirit. It was a return to the example of Christ and his disciples. No vow, no formal ordination bound the members. "For crown and cloth make no priest, nor the emperor's bishop with his words, but the power that Christ giveth, and thus by life are priests known."[2] " A new spirit," says Buddensieg,[3] "animated the organization, new forms marked it out. Poor without begging, led by one will, and obedient to it, in constant intercourse with the people, and armed with the spirit and faith, these poor priests soon became the mightiest champions of the new doctrine.

"Barefoot, clad in a long cloak of dark red color which was the symbol of hard labor and

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1. Schaff V. pt.II.319
2. Trevelyan, p.180, quoting Matthew Eng. Wks. Hitherto Unprinted, p.467
3. Buddensieg, Iohann Wyclif and Seine Zeit. p.169-170 as quoted by Loserth Vol. I.xviii

poverty, a long staff in hand signifying their pastoral office, they wandered in the dioceses of Leicester (and of London), from town to town, from village to village. In churches, chapels, and alms houses, wherever they could get a few hearers together they preached the glories of God's law." Like Wesley, Wyclif kept his preachers moving constantly from place to place for he "feared that they should become possessioners, tied to one place like a dog."[1] His preachers were meant to be examples of the ideal he set forth again and again in his works: " A priest shouod live holily in prayer, in desires and thoughts, in godly conversation and in preaching and honest teaching, having God's commandments and His Gospel ever on his lips, and let his deeds be so righteous that no man may be able with cause to find fault with them, and so open his acts that he may be a true book to all sinful and wicked men to serve God. For the example of a good life stirreth men more than true preaching with only the naked word."[2]

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1. Workman II.203,note 8
2. Schaff V. pt. II.329

But above all Wyclif's followers were preachers; they studied, writes a hostile chronicler, " the compilation of sermons."[1] "The first and greatest work of the priest is to promulgate the religious truth;"[2] "the proclamation of the gospel is the most important pastoral duty;"[3] "far more important than the administration of the ecclesiastical sacraments is the preaching of the gospel,"[4] are statements showing Wyclif's estimate of the importance of preaching. To the neglect of preaching, and the degeneracy of what preaching there was, Wyclif attributed the decay of the age. So far from preaching most 'parish priests were 'dumb hounds', who could better trach hares in the fields than case-endings in the psalter."[5] Likewise " 'mute prelates', whom he compares with 'dumb idols' or 'waterless clouds' were the 'ruin of the church', for 'evangelical preaching' alone could stop the growth of sin, and ' is more precious than the administration of any sacrament.' By preaching, Christ effected more than by all His miracles."[6] Not only was preaching

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1. Workman II.206, note 1
2. Loserth, Sermones I.1, quoting Ibid II.16
3. Ibid I. pt. I quoting Ibid II.16
4. Ibid I. pt. I quoting Opus Evang. II.375
5. Workman II.208, note 3
6. Workman II.209, note 2

neglected, but much of the preaching was in Latin and could not be understood by the people. Latin was supposed to be the holy language, the mere hearing of which would be beneficial but Wyclif said, "The reason why these modern Pharisees neglect to preach the gospel in the popular language is that they fear to betray how much their life contrasts with the Lord's life."[1]

To the popular preaching of the day, mostly by the friars, Wyclif objected because it was too full of "comedies and tragedies, fables and droll stories."[2] "No talk was deemed too preposterous if only it would hold the people's attention. The multitude was amused, the collection was good, the sale of indulgences satisfactory, and the 'penny-preacher' could go on his way rejoicing, for there were friars of whom it was said that they would preach more for a bushel of wheat than to bring a soul from hell.'"[3] In this preaching there was scarcely a trace of the gospel;[4] it was made up largely of legends, anecdotes, fables, and illustrations from natural history.

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1. Loserth, Sermones I.ix
2. Ibid I.vi
3. Workman II.214-215
4. Ibid II.215

Wyclif also protested against those who selected 'fat places' in which to preach, and against the many men who 'preach themselves and leave to preach Christ.'[1] Moreover, according to Wyclif, even when the Word was preached fearlessly there were often found two faults which prevented effectiveness. The one was the minuteness of logical distinctions and divisions under which the truth was buried. Preaching, even as prayer also, was looked upon as a syllogistic exercise in which the end was forgotten in the means. " Oh! if the Apostle," he exclaims, "had heard such hair-splitting how he must have despised it."[2] The second fault was the excessive use of rhetoric and poetic ornament, of swelling words and 'heroic declamation,' under the plea that theology demanded the noblest forms. Such a method in Wyclif's judgment savoured of vainglory and a desire for the reverence of others, and the precedence of others. He pleads: "Not so,brothers beloved. Let us rather follow the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was humble enough to confess: My doctrine is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me. He who

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1. Ibid II.211
2. Ibid II.211, note 1

speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory."[1] To redeem all this neglect and misuse of preaching Wyclif created his Poor Preachers.

Since, by the preachong of the Apostles, the Church had grown and had since decayed by the neglect of preaching, Wyclif proposed to bring about a regeneration by a return to preaching. First of all he felt that those who would preach rightly must have a thorough knowledge of the Gospel, "for God's Word only has life-giving power, and by it alone are members of the Church created."[2] Therefore a sermon without the Word of God was like a meal without bread. Also he objected to expounding the gospel 'piece-meal'[3] by the mere taking of a text, and insisted that the full Gospel ought to be preached. But besides emphasizing that the full Scriptural passage be taught Wyclif also insisted that "'the truth which edifies ought to be uttered aptly' and adapted to the comprehension of the hearer.[4] The end of every sermon should be devotion and saving of souls... In sowing the seed this is best done by

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1. Workman II.211
2. Loserth, Sermones I.vi
3. Ibid
4. Workman II.212,note 2

' a gumble and homely proclamation of the Gospel: for a flowery, captivating style of address is of little value compared to right substance ...' Abstruse questions, by-paths of exegesis, above all ' doubts of schools,' should be put aside, at any rate in sermons for the people. One thing, however, must never be wanting, genuine devout feeling, for 'if the soul is not in tune with the words how can the words have power?....In every proclamation of the gospel the true preacher must address himself to the heart, and by illuminating the mind of the hearers, incline him to obedience.' From all this it follows that the sermon must be in the mother tongue."[1-2]

Workman points out that Wyclif himself falls far short of "these glowing precepts"[3] in his own sermons. Some of them, especially his English sermons, are simple and direct with a warm, evangelical appeal; but for the most part, according to Workman, his Latin sermons are full of "hard

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1. Workman II.212,note 3
2. Ibid II.212
3. Ibid II.212-213.

scholastic formulae," and "in the English sermons the modern reader may be repelled by the method of postillization."[1] Moreover, Wyclif's approach was too intellectual. He could not descend from his professional chair. And his Puritan inclination, which would not permit any anecdotes, poetry, fables or illustrations from current life in his preaching, stripped his sermons of human interest. "For this rejection of all popular methods of appeal Wyclif and his Poor Preachers paid the penalty of failing to win over the masses of the people.[2] However, Wyclif was so intensely in earnest that, in spite of his austere style of preaching, and in spite of the fact that the times were not ripe for reform because of the general ignorance of the people and the powerful authority of the Roman Catholic heirarchy, still "a genuine religious flame of lollardy, lighted at his torch, lasted here and there among the lower classes in the towns and villages of eastern and southern England right down to the Reformation."[3]

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1. Ibid II.213
2. Ibid II.220
3. Ibid II.221

sociological terms,[1] and "in the English novelists the modern reader may be revealed by the method of partitioning."[2] Moreover, Wylie's approach was too intellectual. He could not detach from his aesthetic ideal of art, the Puritan inclination, which would not permit any exception, poetry, novels or literature from current life in the generalized sense of human literature. "The only region for all general method of moral growth and the poor treasures is the penalty of relating ourselves over the manner of the people. Literature, Wylie was so intensely interested that, in spite of his modern style of presentation, and in spite of the fact that the times were not ripe for reform because of the general ignorance of the people and the powerful authority of the Church, Wylie's historical, with "a moving moralizing tone of intensity." Himself at his worst, lapsed here and there into the lower planes in the vague and vicious of pretentious and sentimental thought in the [illegible]."[3]

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1. Idem II, 213
2. Idem II, 220
3. Idem II, 211

PART III

APPRECIATION OF WYCLIF

In the first section of this paper we gave place to the influences that might help us account for Wyclif's ideas: the reaction to a decaying Catholicism, the inheritance of the daring but deadening thought of the English Scholasticism, a new national consciousness, and an awakening impatience of the individual. Here, however, it is our intention to give place to the variable of the individual, Wyclif himself.

Wyclif is attractive even to the student accustomed to modern ways of thinking, and in the gloomy setting of the Middle Ages he is like a bright star in the black night. His ideas, when freed of scholastic chaff, and set in order, speak for themselves. They are as refreshing and stimulating as his own personality. Wyclif's personal character was beyond reproach, even of his enemies. "He was emaciated in body and well nigh destitute in strength, and in conduct most innocent. Very many of the chief men of England conferred with him, loved him dearly, wrote down his sayings and followed his manner of life," a contemporary tells us.[1] Besides

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1. Schaff, V. pt. II.324

his spotless purity and personal charm, Green says that "within this frail form lay a temper quick and restless, an immense energy, an immovable conviction, and an unconquerable pride."[1] Wyclif's spiritual austerity suffers by contrast with Luther's warm emotions, but in the higher moral courgge he was the superior even of Luther.[2] His humour was rare and generally acid,[3] and poetry, music, singing, and architecture did not appeal to him. His sympathies for the poor and downtrodden were unbounded. But Workman is of the opinion that they were probably "impersonal sympathies, bitterness against wrong in the abstract rather than sorrow for one of the wronged."[4] Another evidence of Wyclif's tendency to abstraction was his idea of sin. "The man of today may laugh at Luther's struggles with a personal devil; but one secret of the success of Luther lay in his consciousness of the reality of sin, just as one secret of the failure of Wyclif lay in his doctrine that sin is but a negation --'that it has no idea.'"[5] However, it must not be forgotten that this very

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1. Green p.236
2. Workman II.322
3. Ibid II.322
4. Workman II.322
5. Ibid II.322

tendency to think abstractly, to go back to first causes and examine theoretical bases of the Catholic Church, was the genius of Wyclif's reform ideas. He saw that the Bible, not the Pope, was the final authority of the Church and with his teaching thus theoretically grounded he attacked not the mere abuses, but the supposed basis of the Church in the heirarchy and the sacraments.[1]

No one has ever been more thorough than Wyclif in destructive criticism of the Roman Catholic Church. His revolt was necessarily negative, because only by dissolving the strongly intrenched system that existed was there any possibility of reform. What positive ideas he did have, however, were those of a man who had stepped suddenly out of the darkness into the light and could not see clearly for the time being. His positive like his negative ideas were theoretical for the most part. We see this in his idea that each man holds 'lordship' directly from God and is therefore responsible directly to God. His conception of the Bible as God's Law is another evidence of it. And so, although he asserts

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1. Trevelyan, p.142

that the "church lives not in sacraments invented by the satraps of Antichrist, but in definite faith in the Lord Jesus,"[1] still his belief smacks more of the intellect than the warm experiential religion of Luther and Wesley. However, in his ideas on preaching, in his translation of the Bible, and the organization of his Poor Preachers Wyclif compares favorably with both later reformers. Lastly, Wyclif's positive concept of the Church with each individual responsible only to God was impossibly individualistic. Calvin saw the necessity of Church government. Wyclif, insofar as he saw the necessity for church government at all, was too Erastian. And for this reason it was probably fortunate for England that his premature reform failed.[2]

It is difficult task to evaluate Wyclif accurately. One is excited to the highest admiration at the energy and independence with which he broke the heavy fetters of medeival tradition to think for himself. And no one can remain unmoved at the fearless daring with which he defied the awful authority of

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1. Workman, p.312
2. Workman II.323

the pope. Certainly it was no small honor to be the "first Reformer who dared, when deserted and alone, to question and deny the creed of Christendom around him, to break through the tradition of the past, and with his last breath to assert the freedom of religious thought against the dogmas of the papacy."[1] But to become more exact in our appreciation of him we must agree with Workman that "He attacked in no halting manner the whole medieval conception of the Church, and lashed with scorn its characteristic institutions. He felt that the souls of men were being sacrificed to an overgrown sacramental system, at the roots of which he struck by his attack on the fundamental doctrine of transustantiation. Next Wyclif labored to affect a revival of religious life, especially among the lower classes, by the restoration of simple preaching, and by the distribution to the people of the Word of God in their mother-tongue. In all these aspects -- Schoolman, Politician, Preacher, Reformer,-- Wyclif was the foremost of his age, the range of whose activities was not less remarkable than the energy with which he pursued his aims. Now, even

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1. Green, p.236

if we limit our survey to the centuries immediate to Wyclif we may admit there were schoolmen more profound, political thinkers more discerning, preachers more soul-reaching, reformers more successful, saints more attractive. As a schoolman he is far inferior to Thomas Aquinas or Ockham; as a political thinker he is secondary to Marsiglio; as a preacher he cannot be put on the same level with St. Bernard; as a saint we miss in him the sweetness and light so characteristic of St. Francis; as a reformer he is not comparable, in the permanence of his work, either with Hildebrand at the one extreme or Luther at the other. Nevertheless, in the combination of many qualities, Wyclif stands almost alone, at any rate in England. To this we must add the interest always felt in one who lived before his time. For Wyclif was the harbinger of a premature spring, and the reform which he sought to bring about was then impossible. He tried to accomplish in a few months what the Puritans failed to work out in a century."[1]

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1. Workman I.6-7

While Wyclif had no organic influence upon the later Reformation he may be regarded as the forerunner of the Puritans and Non-Conformists. Wyclif's influence did extend however to the revolt of the Hussites in Bohemia. Hus was a disciple of Wyclif, and it was for holding Wyclif's ideas that Hus was burned at the stake at the council of Constance in 1415.[1] Hus had no influence on Luther, although in 1529, after he had accomplished his reform, Luther wrote upon Hus's copy of Wyclif's Trialogus as printed at Basel in 1525, "I have hitherto taught and held all the opinions of Hus without knowing it. With a like unconsciousness has Staupitz taught them. We are all of us Hussites without knowing it. I do not know what to think for amazement."[2] With these facts in mind we can appreciate a remarkable picture which Buddensieg[3] tells us of having seen in a Bohemian Psalter of 1572, now in the University of Prague, in which Wyclif is presented as striking a spark, Hus as kindling the coals, while Luther is brandishing a lighted torch. But this picturesque

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1. Ibid I.6; II.320; Buddensieg, Pol. Wks. II.iii
2. Workman I.9
3. Buddensieg Ver. Script. I.xliii n.

memory cannot be compared with the dramatic way in which his enemies unwittingly immortalized him, when in 1428, forty-four years after his death, they exhumed his bones, burned them to ashes, and cast them into the river Swift, so that, as Fuller says, "Thus this brook hath conveyed his ashes into Avon, Avon into Severn, Severn into the narrow seas, they into the main ocean. And thus the ashes of Wyclif are the emblem of his doctrine, which now is dispersed all the world over."[1]

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1. Workman II.320 quoting Fuller, History II.424

COMPREHENSIVE SUMMARY

OF

JOHN WYCLIF'S IDEAS FOR THE REFORM OF THE

ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH.

We began our discussion with a sketch of the influences in the background of Wyclif's life. We pointed out the decadence of Catholicism which, however, still formed the warp and woof of medieval thought, and the authority of which was yet supreme. Next we examined the daring habit of thought Wyclif inherited from his Scholastic predecessors which, however, was weighted down by a burdensome method. Following this we saw the great influence that the national aspirations of England had upon Wyclif's thinking. For if he was anything he was a patriot. The fourth great influence was the awakening individualism, of which Wyclif was the supreme example. In order to complete the background of our study we gave a sketch of Wyclif's life, showing that from his position as the foremost schoolman of his day he was called into the struggle with the Church first of all to champion the rights of the nation. His efforts as a patriotl led him to examine more closely the authority of the Church according to the authority he considered primary,- the Bible. From this he examined the relation of Church and State. Rapidly the controversy lost its

political aspects and became a question of religion. Wyclif, to make his position clear, published his work on the authority of Scripture. His position thus clarified his attack became more and more vigorous. First the Papacy and the heirarchy, next the Eucharist and the sacraments; this led him into a struggle with monasticism, which completed his negative attack. Meanwhile he had made efforts for positive reform in having the Bible translated and in training and sending out his Poor Preachers. This took up the most of his time in the last years of his life.

In the second section of the paper we examined Wyclif's ideas for reform in the order in which he dealt with them formally in his works. We saw that in his conception the Church was the body of the predestined, the worthy in God's sight, those who obeyed God's law, in which there was no need of Pope or priest, though they might be used for convenience sake. However, the Church was endowed by God only with spiritual power while the state had all temporal power, headed by the king who

was directly responsible to God and responsible for each of his subjects. Next we discussed Wyclif's conception of the final authority of theBible as God's Law, what a revolution this was, his literal interpretation of it, and his feeling that each individual ought to read it and understand it for himself. After this we considered the attack he launched against the papacy and the heirarchy of the Church, basing his attack, as usual, in Scripture. From this we went to Wyclif's denial of the transustantiation, and his attitude toward the sacraments, showing the effect of hisphilosophical realism, his common-sense, his scriptural background, and his conception of theindividual as directly responsible to God. This led to Wyclif's attack on monasticism in which, by comparison with Christ and his Apostles, he exposed its weaknesses, advocating disendowment and surtailment of abuses following from the privileges permitted monks and friars. Lastly we discussed Wyclif's attempts at positive reform through the training and sending out of his Poor Preachers to live ideal lives, Christlike lives, and to preach the gospel, and distribute the Scriptures.

The last section of the discussion we devoted to an appreciation of Wyclif pointing out his personal charm, learning, indomitable will, and fearless courage. We attempted to evaluate him pointing out that his revolt was necessarily negative, but that it struck at the root of the Catholic system, that he attempted the impossible not counting the cost, and that, though he was not organically related to the Reformation, he was, nevertheless a forerunner, if not in all ideas, at least in spirit, and especially of the Puritans and Non-Conformists.

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